The CHEVALIER DE BOUFFLERS

A ROMANCE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

NESTA H. WEBSTER

THE CHEVALIER DE BOUFFLERS

TO

MY HUSBAND

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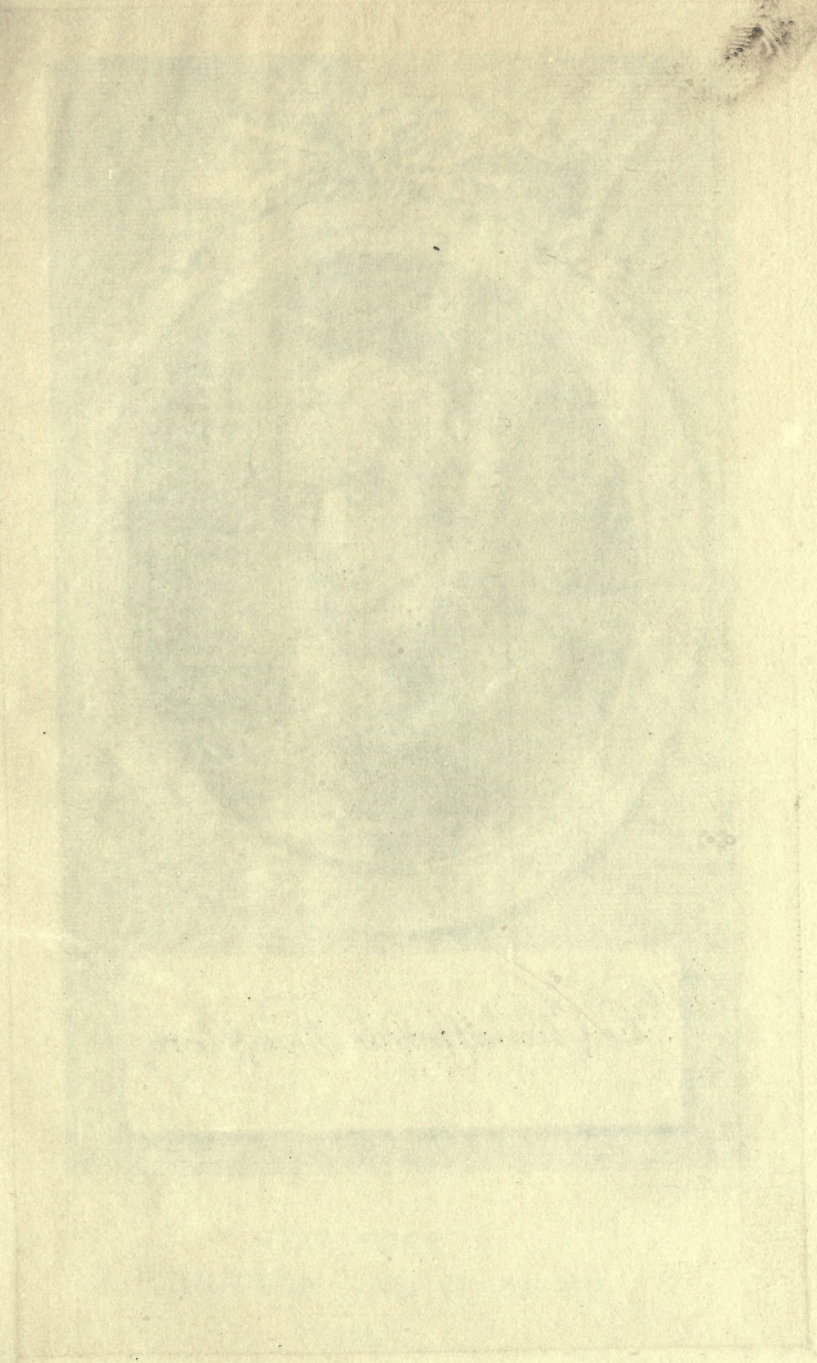

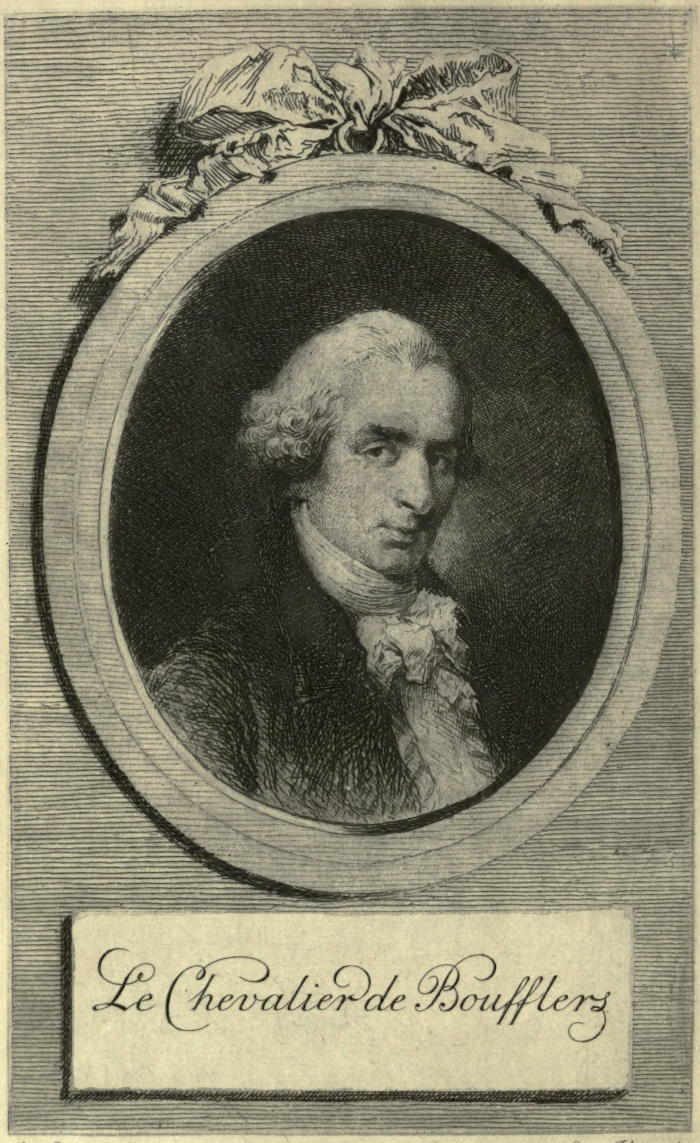

Le Chevalier de Boufflers

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THE CHEVALIER DE BOUFFLERS

A ROMANCE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

BY NESTA H. WEBSTER
(MRS. ARTHUR WEBSTER)
AUTHOR OF "THE SHEEP TRACK"

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"For life, with all it yields of joy and woe;
And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend,—
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is;
And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
Such prize despite the envy of the world,
And, having gained truth, keep truth: that is all."

BROWNING, *A Death in the Desert.*

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PREFACE

In history, as in modern life, the most celebrated people are not necessarily the most interesting. Historians, like journalists, have predilections for certain personages whom they combine to immortalize whilst passing over others who often present a far more absorbing psychological study. This is particularly so in the history of the eighteenth century in France. We have been told a dozen times the story of Julie de Lespinasse and her love-affairs modelled on "Clarissa Harlowe," of Madame de Staël and the victims of her amatory experiments, of Madame du Deffand, Madame Geoffrin, of Lauzun, Fersen, and Lafayette; yet one of the greatest romances of this enthralling period, the love-story of the Chevalier de Boufflers and the Comtesse de Sabran, has been allowed by English writers to pass into oblivion. Theirs was *the* "grande passion" of the times, "they loved each other," says Monsieur Victor du Bled, "with a deep love, so different to the *liaisons à la mode*, with a love such as we understand it"—we of to-day.

Both curiously modern, their letters have none of the rounded periods and stilted phrases of their contemporaries; they talk to each other, smile, laugh, and weep—we can almost hear them as we turn the pages. More than any other woman of her day—far more than the cynic of the Couvent Saint-Joseph—Madame de Sabran might be called the "Sévigné of the eighteenth century." Several writers have compared the two women, for both in character and circumstances there are striking points of resemblance between them but

Madame de Sabran was far more original than her seventeenth-century predecessor. " I feel your charm like that of Madame de Sévigné," Madame de Staël once wrote to her, " and in a greater degree, for there is more real feeling beneath it."

Madame de Sévigné, for all her wit, was quite conventional, and perfectly satisfied with the outer show of things. She entertained a deep respect for society, whilst Madame de Sabran was apt to be bored in crowds, even when composed of all the most important people ; her simple, naïve letters, sometimes wrongly dated, often not dated at all, sometimes hastily scribbled at midnight when she was tired out after a party, sometimes lengthened out into lively *causeries*, have none of the tabulated accuracy of the great marquise, who, as she sat at her writing-table in the Hôtel Carnavalet, doubtless realized that her words would survive in large and magnificently bound volumes on the library shelves of the future. Madame de Sabran evidently never thought of publication ; essentially a creature of moods, she wrote just as she felt, with something of the impromptu charm of Chopin, now gay, now plaintive, with here a little flash of temper, there a gleam of ever-lurking humour, here a riotous *joie de vivre*, there a tender melancholy, then all at once a wild outburst of passion like a stormy passage in the " Nocturnes " that in its turn dies down into peace and harmony once more.

So whilst Madame de Sévigné, alert, observant, at the Court of the Roi Soleil, was busy memorizing for posterity—and posterity does well to be grateful—Madame de Sabran in those rooms a hundred years later was too often dreaming to tell us all we should like to know ; we must wait till she has been amongst fields and woods and mountains for her pen to let itself go in those exquisite descriptions of the world of Nature that was her true element. " J'ai été rêver toute l'après-midi dans un petit bois émaillé de fleurs.

Jamais le temps n'avait été si beau, ni le rossignol si amoureux ; il chantait à me rompre la tête. Devine, si tu peux, à qui je rêvais. . . ."

What was the lover to whom she wrote these nocturnes, and of whom she dreamt as she listened to the nightingale? Perhaps the strangest lover that has ever destroyed a woman's peace of mind. In turn a seminarist, soldier, sailor, explorer, poet, social reformer, politician, and farmer by profession; a wit, a rake, a libertine by nature, Boufflers was, nevertheless, that rare anomaly, a libertine with a heart, as much Don Quixote as Don Juan, alternating his amorous adventures with wild, unpractical schemes for bettering the conditions of humanity, beneath whose irrepressible gaiety—*ma trop grande gaiété*, as he regretfully described it—lay that *bonté sans mesure* that makes it difficult to be as severe to him as one would wish. I have no desire to whitewash Boufflers ; judged from the moral point of view, he was a bad man, yet he had something in him that many of his more virtuous contemporaries lacked, something that has escaped the authors of his biographical notices—a soul that, too often stifled by evil passions, found itself at last in a great love. So, as Monsieur Bardoux has expressed it, the author of cynical epigrams and licentious poems " a donné dans un siècle frivole le plus rare exemple d'amour vrai."

This is the Boufflers I have tried to show, the Boufflers to whom the woman he loved could say : " C'est mon âme qui t'aime ! "

. . . . .

The story of the Chevalier de Boufflers and the Comtesse de Sabran was first given to the world in a large volume of their correspondence, " La Correspondance inédite du Chevalier de Boufflers et de la Comtesse de Sabran, 1778–1788 " (Plon-Nourrit), edited by MM. de Magnieu et Prat in 1875, and compiled from the

original MSS. bequeathed by Elzéar de Sabran to his friend the Vicomte de Magnieu in 1842.

Unfortunately, this collection of letters—some of the most exquisite in the French language—was preceded by an inadequate biographical notice, supplemented by very meagre notes, whilst the writers' omission to date many of their letters resulted in a confusion that only infinite patience on the part of the compilers could have avoided. To the uninitiated reader the narrative was, therefore, almost impossible to follow, the more so because no biography of either of the writers had ever been written. Since then their story has been related by several authors in fragmentary form—in books dealing with them as members of a group, or with short periods of their lives, and finally Monsieur Gaston Maugras in his series—" La Cour de Lunéville," " Les dernières années de la Cour de Lunéville," " La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," and " La Marquise de Custine "—has enabled us to follow through four enchanting volumes the career of the strange Chevalier.[1]

In this book, therefore, I have attempted, for the benefit of English readers, to weave into a whole the fragments taken from all available sources—preferably contemporary sources—having recourse only to the works of modern writers for information that was not to be found elsewhere. It must be understood that nothing imaginary has been added, and if here and there the story reads like fiction rather than fact it is simply because more intimate details have been recorded about these two people than about most of their contemporaries. The dialogues introduced have been either translated verbatim or merely transposed from reported to direct speech. The following are the works from which this book has mainly been compiled :

[1] This series is not the biography of Boufflers, but the picture of a whole society—a vivid and fascinating description of life in the eighteenth century, through which the story of Boufflers recurs intermittently.

The early life of the Chevalier de Boufflers from: *"La Mère du Chevalier de Boufflers," by E. Meaume (1885); "La Réunion de la France et de la Lorraine," by the Comte de Haussonville; *"Le Chevalier de Boufflers et la Comtesse de Sabran avant 1788," by Pierre de Croze (an article in *Le Correspondant* for February 10, 1894); "La Cour de Lunéville," by Gaston Maugras (Plon-Nourrit), 1906.

The early life of Madame de Sabran from: *"Le Chevalier de Boufflers et la Comtesse de Sabran, 1788–1792," by Pierre de Croze (Calmann Lévy), 1894; "La jeunesse de Madame de Sabran" (articles in "La Revue de Famille"), by Lucien Perey, 1891.

Their lives after their meeting in 1777 *to* 1787 from: *"La Correspondance du Chevalier de Boufflers et Madame de Sabran," by Messieurs de Magnieu et Prat (Plon-Nourrit), 1875; *"Lettres du Chevalier de Boufflers à la Comtesse de Sabran," by Paul Prat (Plon-Nourrit), 1891; "La Cour de Lunéville, dernières années," by Gaston Maugras (Plon-Nourrit), 1906.

Their lives after 1789 from: *"Le Chevalier de Boufflers et la Comtesse de Sabran," by Pierre de Croze; "La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," by Gaston Maugras (Plon-Nourrit), 1907; "La Marquise de Custine," by Gaston Maugras (Plon-Nourrit), 1907.

The story of Delphine de Custine in the Terror from: *"La Russie en 1839," by Adolphe de Custine (1843).

Besides these, I have found in the following contemporary and modern writers stray details concerning either Boufflers or Madame de Sabran:

Contemporary *mémoiristes:* Voltaire, Rousseau, Grimm, Bachaumont, Chamfort, Rivarol, Charles Brifaut, Cheverny, La Harpe, the authors of "La Galerie des États Généraux," Horace Walpole, the Prince de Ligne, the Comte de Tilly, the Marquis de Bombelles,

* The books marked with an asterisk are out of print. No edition of their letters is now available

Madame du Deffand, Madame de Genlis, Madame de Staël, Madame Vigée le Brun, the Duchesse d'Abrantès, and the author of " The Mémoires of the Marquise de Créquy."

Modern authors: Octave Uzanne, Eugène Asse, Taschereau, and Arsène Houssaye in biographical notices to editions of Boufflers' works; Mm. Michaud and Jal in their biographical dictionaries, Monsieur Druon in a " Discours à l'Académie de Nancy," Boudet de Puymaigre in " Poêtes et romanciers de la Lorraine," Monsieur Fuinel in " La Plume et l'Épée," Lucien Perey in " Le Duc de Nivernais "; Monsieur Victor du Bled in " Les Causeurs de la Révolution "; Joseph Turquan in " Les Femmes de l'Émigration," Monsieur de Lescure in " Rivarol et la Société française," Monsieur Bardoux in " Madame de Custine," Monsieur Imbert de St. Amand in an article " La Comtesse de Sabran," H. Morse Stephens in his " History of the French Revolution," Lady Blennerhassett in her " Life of Madame de Staël," etc.

If the story of Delphine de Custine in the Terror appears a digression from the main theme of this book I hope it will be forgiven on account of its interest. This appealing and dramatic episode of a period described to us more often by fiction than by facts, is all too little known in England, and seems to me to gain in force by being related as the sequel to Madame de Sabran's own life and attitude towards the coming Revolution. Indeed, the history of the Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran would be incomplete without these pages of family history dealing with the immense crisis in which they played a part. The life of Delphine should be read by every one to whom this story appeals in " La Marquise de Custine," by Gaston Maugras. For the purpose of this book, however, I have not referred to this work of Monsieur Maugras, but have taken the story direct from the account given by Astolphe de Custine.

Besides reconstructing the story I have endeavoured to reconstruct the background on which it was enacted —the Revolutionary Era ; and if, to my more erudite readers, I seem to have enlarged on this subject at too great length, I would point out that many facts about the Revolution familiar to those who have studied it deeply are yet little understood by the general public in England for whom this book is intended. Learned works such as Alison's " History of Europe," " The Cambridge Modern History," etc., have naturally stated the case accurately, but in almost all *popular* books, the Revolution has been persistently misrepresented, and in consequence a host of popular delusions have grown up around it which must be dispelled if one would present fairly the point of view of those who played their part in that amazing drama.

" The French Revolution," said Burke, " is the most astonishing thing that has hitherto happened in the world." It is also the most complex—a fact of which the writers who reduce it to the simple proposition of an oppressed people rising against tyranny give no idea. We must read about it for years, in French, and preferably in contemporary records, before we can begin to understand anything of its causes or its results.

Besides contemporary records I have consulted for this book, as far as possible, impartial authorities, such as Taine, Droz, Martin, and also Louis Madelin, whose lucid and delightfully written history of the Revolution is perhaps the best popular work on the subject, and as an *ouvrage couronné par l'Académie* may be fairly regarded as the expression of enlightened French opinion.[1]

As will be seen by the list of sources from which this book is derived, Monsieur Gaston Maugras is the only living author who has written about Boufflers, and, having had access to much unpublished material besides the

[1] Mr. Heinemann is shortly publishing an English translation of M. Madelin's book.

large number of original MSS. he has himself inherited, he must be regarded as the principal authority on the subject. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, for the purposes of this book, to obtain his permission to quote his works and highly desirable to consult his opinion on various points. A journey to Paris in September 1915 procured the result for which I had hoped—Monsieur Maugras, in spite of his anxiety on account of his three gallant sons now fighting in the armies of our heroic Ally, received me with the greatest kindness; he not only accorded me the permission to quote published material contained in his works and gave me valuable advice, but, with a generosity for which it is difficult to find adequate words of thanks, allowed me to make use of several unpublished MSS. and a charming picture which he was keeping for his next book. Monsieur Maugras' sympathy and encouragement have added greatly to the pleasure of my work.

I must also acknowledge my debt to the London Library, where in the valuable collection of eighteenth-century literature I was able, with the aid of the very efficient staff and by the kindness of Mr. Hagberg Wright, to find practically all the material I required.

N. H. W

March 7, 1916.

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On the cover of this book is represented the coat of arms of the de Boufflers used by all three branches of the family, but surmounted by the standards of the " colonel-général des dragons " and of the " colonel des gardes françaises " which in a letter to the Maréchal Duc de Boufflers, of January 1705, Louis XIV granted to him and all his posterity the privilege of adding to their escutcheon. (See Anselme's " Histoire généalogique de la Maison Royale de France," vol. v. p. 85.)

THE CHEVALIER DE BOUFFLERS

BOOK I

THE OLD RÉGIME

CHAPTER I

" BERGERIES "

In the middle of the eighteenth century, when France was fast hurrying to her ruin under Louis le Bien Aimé, another Court—a Versailles in miniature—held sway on the eastern border of the kingdom. Stanislas Leczinski, the dethroned king of Poland, had triumphantly married his only child, his little " Maryczka," to the greatest *parti* in Europe, the aforesaid Louis, and was living quietly at Wissembourg in Alsace, when, as a crowning piece of good fortune, the dukedom of Lorraine was offered to him by his royal son-in-law. Henceforth the court of Lunéville became the gayest resort of the day. Here came artists, poets, painters, wits and beauties from Paris to pass pleasant days and festive nights under the hospitable roof of " le philosophe bien faisant," to wile away the hours with dancing and music, with *tric-trac* and *comète* in composing verses and making love as the mood of the moment inspired them.

Meanwhile the king did not neglect the welfare of his poorer subjects, for he built hospitals, provided for orphans, and did all in his power—a power limited by

the suzerainty of France—to relieve the oppressions from which they suffered. Essentially democratic at heart, Stanislas could not endure the absurdities of court etiquette, and banished them as far as possible from Lunéville, whilst at Commercy, the little château where the Court spent part of the summer, life was even simpler Here every one did exactly as they liked ; it was just like being at a glorious country-house full of well-chosen guests who never wished to go away.

The one exception to this pleasant rule was, however, the wife of Stanislas, Queen Catherine Opalinska, who hated Lorraine and longed perpetually for her native Poland. She was a worthy and charitable lady, but unfortunately her somewhat " dour " personality acted as a continual damper to the bounding spirits of Stanislas. Apart from her dislike for Lorraine, she had, however, a very real grievance, for, though queen in name, the real queen of Lunéville was not Catherine Opalinska, but Catherine, Marquise de Boufflers, who reigned not only over the Court but over the heart of the king.

Sixth amongst the many brilliant daughters of the Prince de Beauvau Craon, Catherine had married at the age of twenty-three the Marquis de Boufflers, grandson of the famous Maréchal de Boufflers, the defender of Lille and Namur, who had been created " duc et pair " by Louis XIV.[1] The marquis, true to his traditions, spent his life campaigning, and left his wife to keep the Court of Lunéville amused.[2] In this she succeeded admirably, and before long every one, from Stanislas down to his young comptroller of finances, fell under the spell of the irresistible marquise. The place she occupied in the king's affections was, however, one that had been long vacated by the poor queen. The Duchesse Ossolinska, the beautiful Comtesse Jablonowska, the Comtesse de Linanges, had each in turn held

[1] See Genealogy of the de Boufflers in Appendix, p. 420.

[2] The Marquis was killed in a carriage accident on February 12, 1751. He does not come into this story at all.

the monarch's wandering fancy; but now for a year Catherine Opalinska had seen all her former rivals abandoned in favour of the young Madame de Boufflers, whom he had first met on his arrival in Lorraine.

No one more fascinating could be imagined. Though not strictly beautiful, she had nevertheless a dazzling complexion, glorious hair, and a divine figure. But her great charm lay in the fact that she was so unlike other people! Many women of her world were gay, many attractive, but none possessed her sparkling sense of humour, her buoyant and never-failing vitality!

One spring evening, May 30, 1738, the Court assembled at Commercy for the summer were awaiting the return of Madame de Boufflers from the neighbouring town of Bar-le-duc, whither she had driven off gaily to transact some business. Her health at this moment demanded care, for her second child was shortly expected, and a serious-minded magistrate of the town had therefore been requested to escort her back. But the hour was growing late and the travellers were not yet in sight—what could have delayed their arrival?

At last a cloud of dust was observed in the distance, which, as it rolled nearer, proved to be indeed the long-expected post-chaise moving heavily along the road; but when finally it drew up before the steps of the Château no sprightly marquise appeared from the interior; instead, the magistrate, a "grave and reverent seigneur," descended slowly to the ground, holding in his arms a bundle from which peeped out the tiny crumpled face of a new-born infant.

Bathed in confusion, the magistrate proceeded to explain the *contretemps* which had delayed their arrival. The post-chaise was half-way between Bar-le-duc and Commercy when Madame la Marquise became aware of the imminent arrival of the child she was expecting. No village was in sight nor any passer-by who could come to the rescue in this emergency; there was nothing for it, therefore, but to stop the

carriage and take refuge on the grass by the roadside. . . . He himself had performed the part of *accoucheur*.[1]

Little had the magistrate dreamt, when he set out with the marquise from Bar-le-duc, that he would be required to perform so strange an office! No one who knew the lady, however, was surprised. Madame de Boufflers never could do things like other people, nor, they were destined to discover, could the baby. Who, looking down on its absurd small face that memorable spring evening, dreamt that this little son of the irresponsible marquise would be one day known to the world as the most original man of his time—the famous Chevalier de Boufflers?

Long afterwards, when composing his own epitaph, the Chevalier described in these lines the extraordinary adventure of his birth:

> "Ci-gît un chevalier qui sans cesse courut,
> Qui sur les grands chemins, naquit, vécut, mourut
> Pour prouver ce que dit le sage,
> Que notre vie est un voyage."

A strange journey, strangely begun, was the life of Stanislas de Boufflers!

This little incident, however, in no way interrupted the tenor of Madame de Boufflers' life; so little impression, indeed, had it made on her that when, long afterwards, the date of the Chevalier's birth was inquired into, she could not even remember in which year it had occurred, and the baptismal register had to be consulted.[2] There were so many other things to occupy her attention at this moment—her books, her music, her games of *cavagnole* and *comète*, but, above all, her lovers.

The king, now nearly sixty, far from handsome and of enormous bulk, could not hope to retain the exclusive favours of the marquise. He had long since recognized in his chancellor, M. de la Galaizière, a serious rival; but

[1] "Notice sur la vie de Boufflers," par Octave Ozanne, and "Le Chevalier de Boufflers," by Pierre de Croze in "Le Correspondant."

[2] "La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," by Gaston Maugras, p. 267.

he accepted the situation with all the philosophy of the day. There was also the poet Saint-Lambert, created by himself a marquis—" a great jackanapes and a very tiny genius," said Horace Walpole—with whom Madame de Boufflers acted in a pastoral play as Chloe to his Daphnis ; but of all her adorers—and they were many—the only one for whom she had any real affection was the young comptroller of finances, Monsieur Devau.

François Étienne Devau was born in 1712, one year after Madame de Boufflers, and at the age of twenty-five had already experienced a *grande passion*. The object of this youthful devotion was no other than the famous Madame de Graffigny, the friend of Voltaire and Madame de Châtelet, who, though seventeen years older than himself, returned his affection and initiated him into all the intricacies of that game of love which formed the favourite pastime of the eighteenth century. " Panpan," or " Panpichon," as his " chère Francine " christened him, learnt his lesson well, and, having recovered from his first experience, was now so well versed in the art of love-making that when he lost his heart to Madame de Boufflers he had no difficulty in holding his own even against such rivals as the king and his chancellor.

" Panpan "—for the name given him by Madame de Graffigny was soon adopted by all his friends—was one of those comfortable, selfish, sympathetic creatures so often loved by idle women. With Madame de Boufflers he was, says the *Journal de Collé*, an " animal privé "—or, as we should say to-day, a " tame cat "—and played the part of a sort of confidential butler (" une espèce de valet de chambre bel esprit,") whereby he ensured her undying affection. The bearer of a nickname is usually a loveable sort of person, and so Devau, having been the " cher Panpan " of Madame de Graffigny, became the " tendre veau " of Madame de Boufflers ; " Mon veau, mon charmant veau," we find her writing to him quite at the end of her life, long after other lovers were dead or forgotten.

Whilst Madame de Boufflers was amusing herself at Lunéville with *bergeries*—as the eighteenth century aptly described the love-affairs of the period—the baby, Stanislas, whose arrival had proved so untimely was sent away to a *nourrice* at Haroué, the country house of his grandmother the Princesse de Craon, mother of the Marquise de Boufflers.

The Princesse de Craon had led a gay youth, for she had occupied in the affections of the Duke Leopold of Lorraine the same place that her daughter now held in those of his successor Stanislas.[1] Apparently she took little notice of her new grandson, and confined her attentions to his elder brother, Charles Marc Régis, who had lived with her since his birth two years before.

As time went on little Stanislas found himself left out sadly in the cold. Charles looked on him as a baby, and refused to play with him, and he was reduced to creeping into the kennel of the big yard-dog, "Pataud," for companionship. Nobody bothered about him, but if the little boy was wanted some one would say carelessly, "Better look for him in Pataud's kennel!" and there he was almost sure to be found. In time the two friends became so inseparable that boy and dog alike were known as "Pataud," and "Pataud"—lit. "lout"—was the name under which the child destined to become the greatest wit of his day was known all through his childhood.

This pleasant friendship was at last interrupted, and the two Patauds were obliged to part, for at nine years old the boy Pataud returned to his mother at the Court of Lunéville.

Lunéville must have been an enchanting place for a small boy. King Stanislas was not unlike an Indian Rajah in his passion for mechanical devices, and the

[1] In spite of this distraction the Princesse de Craon found time to present the Prince with no less than twenty children, whilst the Duchesse Leopold became the mother of sixteen. (See "Family of the Prince de Craon" in Appendix, p. 422.)

garden of the Château was laid out at enormous expense to provide every kind of amusement. Here was a " Kiosque " in which to sit and listen to music, enlivened by clockwork figures representing the performer and at every turn one encountered cascades and fountains, sham rockwork and miniature lakes, cupolas and cottages, minarets and pagodas. Most exciting of all was the famous " Rocher," on which a life-size model of a village was erected. This too moved by clockwork, and on being wound up awoke to clamorous life—cocks crowed loudly, dogs barked, cats ran after mice, and a drunkard's wife leant out of a window and poured a pail of water on the head of her returning spouse in the most realistic manner.

Another amusement that awaited Stanislas de Boufflers on his return to Lunéville was his little sister Catherine, who had been born three years before. She was a plain child, and far from clever, but the Marquise de Boufflers was devoted to her, and would never allow her to be sent away to a *nourrice*, as her other children had been. Every one at Lunéville spoilt her too, and she was known there as " la divine mignonne." Little Stanislas was too warm-hearted to show any jealousy, and soon grew very fond of her, but it was for his mother that he kept his deepest affection.

Madame de Boufflers, at thirty-six, was still as fascinating as ever, and still as ever surrounded by admirers. Her younger son, watching her with serious dark eyes as she moved lightly about the palace in her rose-coloured satin slippers and gowns of flowered silk, as she sang to the harp or harpsichord the songs she had invented, or talked gaily, lightly, with here and there a peal of delicious laughter, thought his " belle Maman," as he called her, the most wonderful person in the world. " Her gaiety," he wrote long afterwards, " was like a perpetual spring-time in her heart that brought forth flowers to the last day of her life." (Sa gaieté était pour son âme un printemps perpétuel qui n'a cessé

de produire des fleurs nouvelles jusqu'à son dernier jour.)

But it was a gaiety that was never tedious, never of the tiresome chattering order; often she would sit in silence listening to other people whilst from time to time a gleam of humour flashed in her eyes "like a bright light behind a transparent veil." How perfectly she understood the art of conversation is shown in these verses she once composed:

"Il faut dire en deux mots
Ce qu'on veut dire;
Les longs propos
Sont sots.

"Il faut savoir lire
Avant que d'écrire,
Et puis dire en deux mots
Ce qu'on veut dire.
Les long propos
Sont sots.

"Il ne faut pas toujours conter,
Citer,
Dater,
Mais écouter!
Il faut éviter l'emploi
Du moi, du moi,
Voici pourquoi:

"Il est tyrannique,
Trop académique;
L'ennui, l'ennui
Marche avec lui.
Je me conduis toujours ainsi
Ici,
Aussi,
J'ai réussi.

"Il faut dire en deux mots
Ce qu'on veut dire;
Les longs propos
Sont sots." [1]

"Say all you want to
In a word;
To be long-winded
Is absurd.

"Before you write,
First learn to read,
Then in a word
Say all you need.
To be long-winded
Is absurd.

"Don't always date,
Quote and relate,
But listen!
Avoid the use
Of 'I' and 'I,'
And this
Is why:

"It is tyrannical,
Too academical;
Weariness, weariness
Lies that way.
To my creed
Then give heed!
For indeed,
I succeed.

"Say all you want to
In a word;
To be long-winded
Is absurd."

What wonder that a woman who could carry out the principles contained in these lines should be universally

[1] From "La Cour de Lunéville," by Gaston Maugras.

popular? "Ecouter!"—it was this perhaps, her talent for listening, that endeared her most to her admirers, for her replies to their impassioned declarations were not always to their liking. "She exasperated her lovers more by her witticisms than by her inconstancy"[1]—yet they continued to love her.

How soon did the boy looking on at all this realize the truth about the "belle maman" he adored?—understand the true significance of these *bergeries* in which she played so charming a part? It is impossible to know how the realization came to him, but when it did come there were only two ways in which to meet it—with disgust, or with cynical indifference—Stanislas took the latter course. There was nothing, indeed, in his early influences to give him the most elementary ideas of morality, and since, at this discovery, one must either laugh or weep, he chose to laugh—and to continue to adore his mother. Yet he was at heart strangely serious. The attention he paid to the sermons of the Père Menoux, the court chaplain, so impressed the king that he exclaimed, "The boy is a flower destined to adorn the altar!" and henceforth the question of an ecclesiastical career for "Pataud" was often discussed by his mother and the king.

Meanwhile, the abbé to whom his education was confided was the last person in the world to increase the boy's respect for the Church. "L'Abbé Porquet" was a little fragile wreck of a man, yet so full of wit and gaiety that the king and Madame de Boufflers were both delighted by him.

The first evening he was asked to say grace at the royal table disclosed his entire lack of religious knowledge.

"L'Abbé," said the king, "will you repeat the Bénédicité?"

Porquet "regretted deeply," but—he did not know

[1] Mémoires du Prince de Beauvau.

it ! Theology, he proceeded to explain later, did not interest him ; he preferred Voltaire. But the principal thing in life was to enjoy oneself ! So that there should be no misunderstanding on the subject, he once wrote quite a pretty little verse about it :

" M'amuser, n'importe comment.
Voilà toute ma philosophie,
Je crois ne perdre aucun moment,
Hors le moment où je m'ennuie :
Et je tiens ma tâche finie,
Pourvu qu'ainsi tout doucement
Je me défasse de la vie." [1]

These sentiments, needless to say, found a ready echo in the minds of Lunéville, but the king, who believed in maintaining a respect for religious observances, felt it his duty to remonstrate with Porquet when he too openly expressed his sceptical opinions.

" L'Abbé," he remarked pleasantly, " you must really moderate your views. Try to believe in the religion of which you are the apostle—I give you a year to do it in."

Many years went by without any reformation on the part of Porquet, but in spite of this King Stanislas ended by acceding to the wishes of Madame de Boufflers and creating him his almoner. In this capacity it was the duty of the abbé to read the Bible aloud to him. One evening Porquet, overcome by slumber during the performance of his office, stumbled over the words with startling results. The chapter for the day was out of Genesis, and described how God appeared in a dream to Jacob ; but instead of saying, " Dieu apparut en songe à Jacob," the sleepy abbé read aloud this surprising sentence : " Dieu apparut en *singe* à Jacob."

" What ! " cried the king in bewilderment, " surely you meant to say ' en *songe* ? ' "

But the abbé had no intention of admitting his mis-

[1] From " La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," by Gaston Maugras, p. 355.

take. Drawing himself up with dignity, he replied: "Ah, sire, with God all things are possible!"

The possession of such a ready wit could not fail to delight Madame de Boufflers, and a laughing flirtation sprang up between them. Verses of the most daring kind flowed from the pen of the marquise, who found a new pastime in teasing the little "abbé." The beginning of a poem she once sent to him gives a strange idea of the terms she was on with her son's preceptor:

"Jadis je plus à Porquet
Et Porquet m'avait su plaire:
Il devenait plus coquet;
Je devenais moins sévère. . . ."

It is difficult to imagine that Madame de Boufflers could ever have been very severe, and Porquet was certainly the most amusing addition to the laughing world of Lunéville. It was gayer than ever now, for poor Queen Opalinska was dead and the last restraining influence had been removed from the Court. Every evening the sound of laughter and music floated out from Madame de Boufflers' rooms into the Orangerie, and the days were spent in riding and shooting, or in acting comedies in the little theatre built by Stanislas. More and more people came from Paris and all parts of Europe to join the gay circle whence all ceremonial was banished and the whim of the moment was the only law.

One evening in February, when Stanislas de Boufflers was ten years old, a strange couple arrived at Lunéville.

Madame de Boufflers had been away on a visit, and she returned home bringing with her an odd-looking little man of about fifty-five, with sharp features and piercing eyes, who looked wretchedly ill, and a large bony woman of forty-two who was received by the King with transports of delight. These two were no other than Voltaire and his "divine Emilie," the Marquise du Châtelet.

King Stanislas, who adored genius, could not do enough honour to the philosopher, and to the authoress of a work on physics. The couple were lodged in the best

rooms of the Château, and all the *habitués* of the Court vied with each other in entertaining the distinguished guests.

Every one knows of the tragedy that followed, the infatuation of " la divine Émilie," for the young poet Saint-Lambert, who, dazzled by the attentions of the learned lady, forsook Madame de Boufflers and allowed himself to be drawn into the intrigue that had so sordid an ending.

Madame de Boufflers cared nothing for Saint-Lambert's defection, and soon after the death of Madame du Châtelet was amusing herself with another lover, the Comte de Tressan,[1] who had fled to Lunéville from the Court of Versailles, where he had incurred the displeasure of Madame de Pompadour.

De Tressan at once fell so madly in love with Madame de Boufflers that he seemed in danger of losing his reason. For two years he besieged her with burning declarations of passion. " All met," he wrote, " with coldness, abstraction, sometimes with a look of pity, but a look mingled with weariness, embarrassment, and mockery."

Baffled thus in his direct methods of attack, Tressan adopted a course curiously characteristic of the eighteenth century. Love, in this romantic age, was a malady to which every one was so liable that no one, falling a victim to it, felt it necessary to conceal the symptoms. Thus one lover would confide in another as an influenza patient might compare notes with a fellow sufferer on the stages of the disease. It was, therefore, quite natural that Tressan, tortured by the pangs of an unrequited love for Madame de Boufflers, should write to her old lover, Panpan, who, having passed that way himself, might be expected to sympathize with the sufferings of another victim to the malady.

" I cannot tell you, my dear Panpan," we find him

[1] Louis Elizabeth de la Vergne, Comte de Tressan (1705–1783), who had been brought up with Louis XV sharing his studies and amusements.

writing frantically, " all that I have endured since yesterday . . . you know, my dear Panpan, what my feelings are . . . the wildest passion has overcome me, and reflection has not yet restored my reason. . . . You must have seen for days how she has overwhelmed me with disdain, irony, and persiflage . . . endeavour, my dear Panpan, to discover her reasons. . . ." He longs to leave a kiss in her hair, to hide his aching heart in one of her little pink slippers—" dans une de ces jolies mules couleur de roses quoique je ne suis pas sûr cependant qu'il put s'y loger." [1]

Apparently, however, the lady was not always cruel, for the letters convey hints of visits paid by her to his garden in Toul, where every flower reminds him agonizingly of her presence; and there were happy hours, too, when, seated by her harpsichord, the " divine warbler " (la divine fauvette), as he called her, sang to him alone.

" Farewell, queen of my thoughts, of my heart and of my reason . . . ," he ends one of his letters to her; " believe me that I am, and only wish to be, what you desire, to adore without displeasing you, and to occupy only a few moments of your life. I kiss your right hand with respect. . . . I kiss, too, that poor little left hand that hovers so bravely over double octaves. Confess that I am very magnanimous to kiss those naughty little hands after the tricks that they have played on me. Ah! if I dared I would kiss . . . ," etc., etc.[1]

It is not surprising that if Madame de Boufflers received many effusions of this kind they should be met with the " persiflage " and " air of abstraction " of which Tressan complained in his letter to Panpan. Yet, though she could never resist laughing at her lovers, Madame de Boufflers was fundamentally the most good-natured woman in the world, and her kindness usually healed the wounds her mockery had caused.

We do not know how the affair of Tressan ended, but his letters to Panpan four years later convey no longer

[1] " La Mère du Chevalier de Boufflers," by E. Meaume.

the impression of unrequited love, and it is probable that he enjoyed the same favour as her other lovers. Madame de Boufflers was the incarnation of her age, the age that at the same time repels and fascinates. Voltaire and the so-called philosophers of the eighteenth century had undermined all belief in a hereafter, and the gay world danced with smiling indifference towards the abyss of nothingness—the "néant"—that they believed awaited them. It is said that Madame de Boufflers adopted as her own the epitaph composed by the Comtesse de Verrue, summing up in a word her own philosophy of life :

"Ci-gît, dans une paix profonde
Cette dame de volupté
Qui, pour plus grande sûreté,
Fit son Paradis en ce monde"

CHAPTER II

"A GOOD DEVIL, BUT A BAD SAINT"

WHILST his mother was amusing herself with "bergeries" Stanislas de Boufflers was leading a riotous youth under the care of the Abbé Porquet. In spite of his reputation for infant piety, the son of the "Dame de Volupté" had inherited strong passions and a spirit of adventure that, as the years went on, led him into all kinds of escapades. But in the eighteenth century a prelate had little need to cultivate austerity, and his behaviour appeared to no one at Lunéville an obstacle to his entering the Church as the king and his mother had arranged. Madame de Boufflers had only a small fortune of her own, and so little had she used her power over the king to enrich herself that Voltaire tells us "she had hardly the wherewithal to buy herself petticoats." Charles, her elder son (now the Marquis de Boufflers in consequence of his father's death), having followed the profession of his ancestors, the family resources were needed to defray his expenses in the army, and therefore some more remunerative employment must be found for Stanislas. The Church, with such powerful influence as the king's at his back, was obviously the shortest road to fame and to fortune, and so, regardless of the boy's glaring unfitness for an ecclesiastical career, the livings of Longeville and Béchamp were bestowed on him, and he became known to the world under the solemn title of the "Abbé de Boufflers."

Henceforth this strange abbé of eighteen was to be seen riding joyously to hounds, acting, dancing, singing, and composing ribald verses in the intervals of theo-

logical studies. Porquet, far from exercising any sobering influence over his pupil, became his boon companion, and the two abbés "rhymed together on woman, love, and folly."

Boufflers' talent for making verses provoked so much admiration at Lunéville that when he was only twenty it was decided to make him a member of the "Académie de Nancy," and, since Porquet must not be left out, both abbés were received there on the same day.

Nobody, of course, saw any irony in the address made to Boufflers on this occasion.

"Until now," the President remarked solemnly, "you have devoted yourself to the study of sacred books and theology, because you were born to enlighten vast dioceses and to be placed hereafter amongst the foremost pillars of the Church . . . "!

What must have been the feelings of the young abbé on hearing this exhortation? From the first he had never shown the least inclination to the calling chosen for him; no one more than he detested humbug, and as time went on he grew more and more to dread the thought of taking vows.

At last, one dreadful day, his mother told him that the time had come for him to go to Paris and enter Saint-Sulpice as a seminarist. Stanislas heard these words with dismay. He could not bear the idea of leaving Lunéville and the smiling hills of Lorraine. He thought of the glorious days spent in the chase across country on his English hunters, and with a sinking heart he felt the grim walls of Saint-Sulpice closing round him, shutting out the free outdoor life he loved. But in vain he begged Madame de Boufflers to change her mind and allow him to become a soldier like his father and brother, assuring her that he had no vocation for the priesthood; his mother only replied impatiently that he was a dreamer—what did he want with a vocation, when other priests got on so well without one? And though at last he threw himself at her feet and implored her to

reconsider her decision, nothing would move Madame de Boufflers; she only told him not to weary her with more discussion; he must go into the Church, and there was an end of it.[1]

In desperation Stanislas sought the king and put his case before him. The old man, who was really fond of young Boufflers, showed no impatience, and listened sympathetically to all he had to say, but he would not reverse Madame de Boufflers' decision. He told him to be reasonable and to do what his mother wished; all would be for the best. "We have great hopes for you," he ended kindly; "I will do everything in my power for you, and help you to attain the highest places in the Church."

"I care nothing for advancement," Stanislas answered sadly; "ambition has no place in my heart."

"What? You would not care to be one day a great prelate—perhaps a cardinal?"

"I would rather be happy than great."

The king understood this. He was at heart a simple soul, and could enter into the boy's feelings. Still, it was impossible to oppose Madame de Boufflers. So a few weeks later Boufflers, with despair in his heart, bade farewell to his mother and the "divine mignonne," to kind old Stanislas, to his friends Panpan and Porquet, and, last but not least, to his English hunters, and set forth on the long road to Paris.

Long afterwards, looking back on the world he left that day behind him, he wrote: "When I think of that Court of Lunéville I seem to be remembering the pages of a novel rather than years of my own life."

His heart sank still lower when he arrived at his destination and found himself within the gloomy precincts of the Saint-Sulpice under the vigilant eyes of the Père Couthurier and the pious priests of the seminary. No more for young de Boufflers the pleasures of the chase, nights of revelry, laughter, love, and song!

[1] "La Cour de Lunéville, dernières années," by Gaston Maugras.

But the depression that filled him on arrival did not last long, and his wild spirits soon came to the rescue. His career at Saint-Sulpice was, in fact, a series of outbreaks against discipline, and before many weeks had sped he was gaily filling up the *bénitiers* with ink wherewith the unsuspecting brothers adorned their foreheads, and enlivening discourses by his really remarkable talent for imitating the sounds of a farmyard. There were plenty of amusing people to welcome him in Paris—amongst them his mother's brother, the Prince de Beauvau, her sisters the Maréchale de Mirepoix and the abbess of Saint-Antoine,[1] and her aunt the Maréchale de Luxembourg (once the Duchesse de Boufflers), of whom much more anon.

The Marquise de Boufflers had often stayed in Paris, and indeed held an honorary post as lady-in-waiting to the king's old sisters, so she had many friends, who were all delighted to welcome the young seminarist. The trouble was that the rules of Saint-Sulpice forbade unlimited liberty, and Boufflers was obliged to refuse most of the invitations he received. Filled with indignation at this severity, he wrote home hastily to his mother: "I have just heard a frightful thing! I am only to be allowed out twice a month instead of twice a week, and then I must be in by five o'clock!"

It was agreed at Lunéville that this was intolerable, and a letter from Stanislas to the Père Couthurier had the desired effect of relaxing discipline in the case of the rebellious abbé.

Another hardship, however, awaited him at Saint-Sulpice. Boufflers, accustomed to the delicacies of the royal table, found the diet of the seminary all too meagre, and, being possessed of a healthy appetite, would have fared badly but for the kindness of his friends, who kept

[1] Gabrielle de Beauvau, abbess of the royal "abbaye" de la Rue Saint-Antoine. "Le Chevalier de Boufflers, son neveu, disait toujours qu'elle était la personne la plus naturellement spirituelle et la plus naïvement piquante qu'il eût jamais connue." ("Mémoires de la Marquise de Créquy," vol. ii. p. 133.)

him supplied with good things. These he consumed in the privacy of his cell, and wrote charming verses in return.

In a letter to his aunt, the Maréchale de Mirepoix, he describes amusingly one of these surreptitious banquets :

" I must beg you, Madame la Maréchale, to pay yourself my compliments, to assure yourself of my respect, to ask yourself whether you are well, whether you had a good journey, and whether you are not very tired. . . . I have just been obliged to leave you for a moment in order to lunch on half a pie that the Princesse de Chimay [1] sent me; from it I have derived invincible courage wherewith to brave the diet of the seminary, and laid up a store of sobriety for the whole day. Madame du Deffand sent me lately two excellent cold partridges. . . . Monsieur le Président [2] sent me a tongue much better suited to the seminary than my own, for it is stuffed, and I am glad of it, as thus it is not in a condition to tell Monsieur Couthurier about my behaviour. . . . You see, from the account I have given you of my provisions and my verses, that my room is half Parnassus and half larder, and he who inhabits it is half poet and half ogre—but more ogre than poet ! There, my dear aunt !—give my respects to my grandmother and kiss yourself from me on the forehead in the looking-glass—I hear a bell ring, so I take my surplice and hood and fly to service. . . . If I am scolded I shall say it was you who kept me ! Good-bye—Good-bye ! "

The Maréchale de Mirepoix, to whom these compliments were addressed, was the elder sister of the Marquise de Boufflers. As Anne Marguerite Gabrielle de Beauvau Craon, she had first married the Prince de Lixin, who was killed in a duel with the Duc de Richelieu, and after his death she made one of the few love marriages of the period, the object of her affections being the Maréchal de Mirepoix—" a hard, polite, dry, and civil man," says Horace Walpole, whom his wife, however, contrived to adore. She had, unhappily, another and

[1] The Prince de Chimay was Boufflers' first cousin.

[2] The President Henault, one of Madame du Deffand's many lovers.

less admirable passion, and this was for gambling. "Madame de Mirepoix," Walpole observes, "is *the* agreeable woman of the world, when she pleases—but there must not be a card in the room." It was the besetting vice that ran through all her family, and that proved disastrous later on, as we shall see, both to the Marquise de Boufflers and her son the Chevalier.

But Madame de Mirepoix allowed her passion to lead her into depths never reached by her more irresponsible sister. Desperate to recoup herself and to cover her continual losses, she was reduced to befriending the King's favourites, first Madame de Pompadour and later Madame du Barry, thereby securing the aid of the royal purse to help her out of difficulties.

It was probably through Madame de Mirepoix that young de Boufflers made the acquaintance of the woman who was helping to ruin France. Soon after his arrival at Saint-Sulpice we find him riding constantly along the road to Versailles on a "great devil of a horse" and dismounting at the wonderful house next door to the Château where, amidst all that was most exquisite in the art of France, sat that amazing woman, her cheeks wasting beneath their rouge, her eyes bright with fever—Madame de Pompadour, nearing the end of her short and evil life. Yet behind the wreckage of her beauty her intellect was as alert as ever; though her charms had long since ceased to appeal to his senses, her mind still held sway over the feeble brain of the king; she was still able to amuse him, able by means of ceaseless effort to dispel his perpetual *ennui*.

Like many another woman who has lost the power to charm, she had now taken up a "cause." In the *entresol* of the Château she had secured a lodging for the "docteur Quesnay," and here, in the intervals of wheedling money and privileges out of the man who had raised her from obscurity to the place of power she occupied, she would find her way surreptitiously to join the crowd of social reformers that the doctor

collected around him. "This little *entresol*, the rendezvous of the boldest innovators, of the most determined *esprits forts*, of the most ardent materialists, was the secret laboratory of the coming Revolution, of disorder and destruction. To be met there—talking, dining, declaiming, conspiring together were such men as d'Alembert, the chief of the Encyclopédists, Duclos, who said of the great nobles by whom he was flattered : 'They fear us as thieves fear street-lamps. . . .' Rugged democrats in appearance, compliant in reality, eating with pride the good dinners of the great ones of the earth whose so-called dignity makes them smile ! . . ." [1]

It was characteristic of such democrats to choose the King's own palace for their meeting-place, and the King's favourite for their presiding genius. Yet they knew, these so-called friends of the people, that the miseries the people suffered were owing to this woman in a greater degree than to any other cause. When, in 1750, the Revolution nearly broke out, the insults of the populace were all directed against Madame de Pompadour.

"We are dying of hunger ! " cried the fishwives surrounding the carriage of the Dauphin as he crossed the bridge of La Tournelle. A few louis were distributed amongst them. But the cries broke out anew : "Monseigneur, we do not want your money ; it is bread we need. We love you well—but send away the miserable woman who is ruling the kingdom and causing us to perish. If we could catch her there would soon be little left of her ! " And indeed Madame de Pompadour, venturing incautiously into Paris, was obliged to fly for her life to avoid being torn to pieces. The enraged people, baffled of their prey, threatened to march on Versailles and burn down the Château. Alas for popular justice ! the march was delayed thirty-nine years longer, and another woman, innocent of wrongs towards the nation, suffered in her stead.

But of all this Stanislas de Boufflers probably guessed

[1] "La Cour de Louis XV," by Imbert de Saint-Amand, p. 242.

nothing. Very young and generous-minded men are easily deceived by clever women with a chequered past behind them, and to the boy of twenty-three this brilliant woman of forty doubtless appeared a divinity. Accustomed from his youth to the most flagrant immorality, her position at the Court must have seemed to him quite natural, and she was skilful enough to pose as an advocate for the rights of the people, thereby appealing to that passionate love of humanity which lay at the bottom of his nature. He saw on one side the degraded Court, the weak and self-indulgent King, and on the other a band of reformers whose rugged speech and plain manners distinguished them from the false and polished courtiers, who discussed marvellous schemes of legislation by which a model state should be evolved out of the existing chaos.

At this period of his life, however, Boufflers was incapable of taking anything seriously for long, and as time went on he threw himself more and more into dissipation. Everything conspired to make him reckless —the wild blood that ran in his veins, the disastrous influences of his youth, and now the restraints of the seminary, which served only to whet his appetite for pleasure. When he *did* get out his pent-up spirits were apt to carry him away completely. Thus at the Prince de Conti's country house—"L'Isle Adam"—his behaviour led him into sad disgrace.

It was impossible, Boufflers had written home rapturously, to give an idea of the delights of "L'Isle Adam." "We are here in battalions . . . and there are pretty women by the dozen. I could imagine myself at the *salon* where everything enchants the eye but nothing holds it, so I have made up my mind to love every one at once."

At supper the pleasure of the day reached its height. In the eighteenth century supper-parties often turned into revels, and ended up with songs of a ribald kind. One evening, when the mirth ran high and champagne

flowed too freely, Boufflers, excited by wine and merriment, gave vent to an impromptu song even more daring than the rest, which reached the ears of the Dauphin [1] and brought him a severe reprimand from Court.

"I was unanimously condemned," he wrote with shame to the Abbé Porquet, "and unfortunately with justice."

Yet even this experience did not teach the irrepressible abbé to restrain his muse, for soon after we find him busily engaged on literary work in his cell. A theological treatise, no doubt? Alas, nothing of the kind!

In a few weeks the salons of Paris were startled by the appearance of a short story entitled, "Aline, Reine de Golconde," which told in really graceful language how a little milkmaid, by the exercise of her charms, rose to be queen of Golconda. The pastoral ending to this licentious tale is characteristic of Boufflers' whimsical turn of mind. The author, having described his encounters with his adored Aline at various stages of her triumphal career, explains that he has now retired to a desert to end his life in solitude:

"My reader has perhaps believed till now that it was to him I was telling this story, but, as he never asked me to do so, he will think it only natural that it should be addressed to a little old woman dressed in palm-leaves who has long inhabited the desert to which I have retired and had asked me to recount my most interesting adventures to her."

Needless to say, the little old woman turns out to be no other than Aline herself:

"'What! is it you again?' I cried. 'I must be very old, for, if I remember rightly, I am one year older than you; but it is impossible to be one year older than your face!'

"'What do our age or our faces matter?' she answered gravely. 'Once we were young and handsome; let us now be wise, and we shall be happier. . . .'

"Then she led me towards a high mountain covered

[1] Father of Louis XVI

with fruit-trees of different kinds; a stream of clear and sparkling water ran in and out from the summit. . . .

"'Look,' she said, 'is not that enough for your happiness? This is my abode; it can be yours too if you wish. . . .'

"I fell at the feet of the divine Aline, filled with admiration for her and of contempt for myself; we loved each other more than ever, and became the universe to one another. I have already passed many delightful years with this wise companion; I have left my wild passions and all my prejudices behind in the world; my arms have become more industrious, my mind profounder, my heart more feeling. Aline has taught me to find a charm in gentle labour, in pleasant thoughts and tender feelings, and it is only at the end of my days that I have begun to live!" (Ce n'est qu'à la fin de mes jours que j'ai commencé à vivre!)

The story of Aline is, of course, frankly pagan in its morality, and, to the cynical mind of the eighteenth century, it acquired an additional piquancy when it was discovered to be the work of the young seminarist—Stanislas de Boufflers.

"For six months 'Aline' was the rage. Innumerable copies passed from *salon* to *salon*, from boudoir to boudoir, from one set to another; people fought for the manuscripts, they talked of nothing but the story and its author. Boufflers had a vogue he had never sought, and which for that reason was all the greater, and landed him straight away in the domain of gallantry. Every woman wanted to know the happy lover of the milkmaid, the simple and charming writer who by the freshness and pretty turn of his phrases had been able to excite the curiosity of a public wearied by the dulness of so many little novels. Dowagers had this *bagatelle* read out to them, and smiled as they applauded. At Versailles the whole Court was under the spell, and Madame de Pompadour took so keen an interest in reading 'Aline,' and retained such a favourable impression of it, that, according to Bachaumont, she conceived the idea of the little rustic farm and gardens of the Petit Trianon. She wanted to keep cows and milk

them herself, to dress up in the corselet and white petticoat of Aline and in this coquettish disguise to fascinate afresh her royal and inconstant lover." [1]

For the modern mind it is difficult to understand the extraordinary success of "Aline." It is too irresponsible to shock us—for no one could take its morality seriously, and there is not a coarse word from beginning to end—but the impression left on the mind is of a rather charming absurdity. One must understand, however, the mind of the eighteenth century to appreciate its novelty. Artificiality had been so long the order of the day, stilted romances crammed with classical allusions, that Boufflers' little story was like a sudden getting back to Nature for these hothouse brains. His charming descriptions of fields and streams and of the "simple life," though commonplaces to us, were entirely new to them, and thrilled them with all the joy of a discovery. Boufflers was indeed a revelation to his age, for he dared to be perfectly natural. It was this that made the charm of his personality, and distinguished him from the puppet men of the *salons*. He never achieved anything really great in literature, but his verses have a whimsicality, an original turn to be found in no others of the period. "How can one seriously discuss the style of the Chevalier de Boufflers, since it consists in being without one?" wrote the Prince de Ligne. "He never wrote verses for the sake of writing them, but he seized on the point, the salt, the right word, the piquant and funny side of things in the society verses of which he was the god. How can any one compare him with Voiture, stilted, involved, dry, cold, and hard—he, with his charming carelessness, with gaiety in every verse, with his witty silliness and his good taste amidst the bad taste underlying it? In a word, he has his own way of saying things, and he says nothing but what he wants to say."

There was a further point about Boufflers usually

[1] "Notice sur la vie de Boufflers," by Octave Uzanne.

overlooked by his critics—the strange seriousness that lay behind all his folly. The buffoon who is only a buffoon soon becomes wearisome; the true humorist has almost invariably an underlying current of gravity, sometimes even of melancholy. Boufflers was no exception to this rule. Underneath all his fooling, through all his amorous adventures and his life as wit and man of fashion, as actor, poet, soldier, explorer, the same dream of a truer, simpler life pursued him—the life that but half mockingly he described at the end of "Aline": "Ce n'est qu'à la fin de mes jours que j'ai commencé à vivre."

These concluding words, as we shall see, proved strangely prophetic of his future.

The publication of "Aline, Reine de Golconde," settled, however, Boufflers' career. The story having been deliberated over by the authorities at Saint-Sulpice, the impious abbé was summoned and informed that grave doubts were entertained as to his vocation. Boufflers, always frank, heartily concurred with the opinion of his superiors.

"Nothing," he said fervently, "is further from my thoughts than the desire to become an ecclesiastic. Of course I have no vocation. I would far rather follow the calling of my ancestors, and be a soldier."

To this reply there was nothing to be said, and the Père Couthurier was faced with the unpleasant duty of informing Boufflers' relations that he must leave the seminary.

But the young abbé saved him any trouble in the matter by taking the law into his own hands. Without saying a word to any one, he watched his opportunity, and one day, when the holy brothers were engaged at prayer or meditation and the precincts were deserted, he hurried to his cell, slipped out of the hated cassock, tore off his hood, and crept out of the gate into the street.

Oh the joy of that moment! The gloomy portals of Saint-Sulpice behind him, the blue sky overhead, and

the great world of excitement and of adventure before him. He was free once more—free to make love and enjoy life like other men, without the shadow of the priesthood hanging over him; and, as usual, he found a vent for his spirits by bursting into rhyme:

"J'ai quitté ma soutane
Malgré tous mes parents;
Je veux que Dieu me damne
Si jamais je la prends.
Eh! mais oui dà,
Comment peut-on trouver du mal à ça?
Eh! mais oui dà,
Se fera prêtre qui voudra.

"J'aime mieux mon Annette
Que mon bonnet carré,
Que ma noire jaquette
Et mon rabat moiré.
Eh! mais oui dà,
Comment peut-on trouver du mal à ça?
Eh! mais oui dà,
Se fera prêtre qui voudra."

Yet, after giving vent to this ribald outburst, we find the extraordinary ex-abbé sitting down to write a letter of immense length to Porquet describing with the gravity of an elderly philosopher his exact reasons for changing his profession.

"Well, my dear abbé, here am I on the point of carrying out a project to which my humour has always inclined and which your reason has always blamed—that of changing my calling. It is no light thing to begin a new life, so to speak, at twenty-four; and perhaps you will tell me that I ought to think it over more seriously than my age or my light-heartedness enables me to do; but do not condemn me without having heard me out one last time; and since, in the matter of happiness, the only true judges are the interested parties, let me plead and sum up my own case.

"I was on the road to fortune; the first steps I made on it sufficed to show me this. The most favourable circumstances seemed to conspire in presenting a brilliant future to my imagination. I could, without merit, have obtained—like so many others—certain

privileges ; by means of a little hypocrisy I should probably have become a bishop ; perhaps, by a little knavery, a cardinal ; who knows but that a few more artifices and intrigues might not have placed me at the head of the Church ? But I would rather be aide-de-camp in the Soubise army : ' Trahit sua quemque voluptas.' The first rule for conduct is not to become rich and powerful, but to know one's true desires and follow them. Alexander, with the gold of Asia in his coffers and the sceptre of the universe in his hands, sought happiness in Babylon, and a little shepherd boy will find it in his own village if he wins for his wife the little peasant girl he loves.

" But to leave Alexander and return to myself (for I am much more like the shepherd boy than I am like Alexander), you know that the three principal traits in my character are hot blood, thoughtlessness, and independence. Compare such a character with the duties of the calling I had adopted and tell me whether you think I was fitted for it. You know how impossible it is for me, but how important it is for an ecclesiastic, to conceal all his desires, to disguise all his thoughts, to be careful of all he says, and to avoid drawing attention to all he does. Think of the bitter hatreds, the black jealousies, the miserable perfidies, that reign even more in the hearts of priests than of other men, and then of the hold that my frankness, my want of discretion, my levity, in fact, would have given over me ; you will admit that I was not made to live amongst those sort of people. Infer then, dear abbé, from my long letter, and still more from the long time we have lived together, that I may, as often happens, be carried away from my duties by my levity, by the gaiety of youth, by the force of my passions, but I will die rather than cease to be honest ! "

This was Boufflers at his best ; all his life he hated hypocrisy. Nearly twenty years later we find him writing the same thing in briefer language : " J'aime mieux être bon diable que mauvais saint ! " And this sentence may be taken as an epitome of his reasons for leaving Saint-Sulpice.

CHAPTER III

"MONSIEUR CHARLES"

THE doors of the seminary having closed behind him, Stanislas de Boufflers lost no time in embarking on his new career. The Seven Years War was not yet ended, and so there was still a chance of glory for a boy with the fighting blood of the de Boufflers rioting in his veins. Through the influence of his uncle, the Prince de Beauvau, he succeeded in getting a commission in the army of the Prince de Soubise, now engaged on a campaign in Hesse. At the same time he was created a Chevalier de Malte (Knight of Malta), an order that was both religious and military, and conferred on him the strange privilege of being allowed to attend mass with a surplice worn over his uniform. A more tangible advantage lay, however, in the fact that, as Chevalier de Malte, he was able to draw his revenues from the livings conferred on him by Stanislas, whilst renouncing all his vows except that of celibacy, a detail that at this period of his life did not trouble him at all, though, as we shall see, its consequences were destined to be far-reaching. And so Boufflers—henceforth to become famous as the Chevalier de Boufflers—set forth gaily to the war. How glorious to exchange the "great devil of a horse" that had carried the unwilling seminarist through the streets of Paris for the splendid chargers —named by him "Le Prince Ferdinand" and "Le Prince Héréditaire," after two generals in the enemy's army—now owned by this gallant captain of hussars!

With a song on his lips the Chevalier rode into the fiercest battles, and, returning to camp, laid aside his sword to write love-poems to the ladies he had left behind in Paris, or to delight his companions with his *bons mots* and his verses.

No less than his gallant ancestors did our Chevalier show himself worthy of his traditions, and at the end of the war the great-grandson of the defender of Lille returned to Lunéville with a splendid record for valour.

With the signing of the peace of Hubertville in 1763 the military career of Boufflers came temporarily to an end, and once more he found himself with no adequate outlet for his energies. The life at Lunéville soon failed to satisfy the man who was described as "le plus errant des chevaliers," and to satisfy his roving nature Stanislas from time to time sent the Chevalier on diplomatic missions, in which pursuit his ready wit might be expected to stand him in good stead. It proved occasionally too ready, as in the case of his visit to the Princess Christine of Saxony. This princess, the daughter of Frederick Augustus, Elector of Saxony, and sister to the Dauphine of France, had just been made abbess of the convent of Remiremont, and Stanislas felt it incumbent on him to send her his congratulations on the event. The Chevalier de Boufflers, having been chosen as his emissary, no doubt looked forward to an amusing visit, for Remiremont was one of the gayest convents of the day, and the rendezvous of many pleasant people.

Unfortunately, on the journey he caught a chill which resulted in a badly swollen cheek. Now Boufflers at his best was never strictly handsome, and this ill-timed excrescence certainly did not improve his appearance. Whether the princess considered the luckless Chevalier guilty of some form of *lèse-majesté* in having permitted his cheek to swell before entering her presence, or whether she had some other cause for annoyance, history does not relate; we only know that the Prin-

cess Christine—a homely German with the opulent charms of her race—received him with marked coldness. This was too much for Boufflers, accustomed to be made much of by the great world, and as he made his way homewards he could not refrain from giving vent to his feelings by his fatal passion for rhyming. His version of the incident is given in a poem of which the two first verses are as follows :

"Enivré du brillant poste
Que j'occupe en ce moment,
Dans une chaise de poste
Je me campe fièrement,
Et je vais en ambassade,
Au nom de mon souverain,
Dire que je suis malade
Et que lui se porte bien.

"Avec une joue enflée,
Je débarque tout honteux :
La princesse boursouflée,
Au lieu d'une, en avait deux ;
Et son Altesse sauvage
Sans doute a trouvé mauvais
Que j'eusse sur mon visage
La moitié de ses attraits."

These irreverent verses convulsed Lunéville, but having been read by the Comte de Lusace, brother of "the puffy princess"—"la princesse boursouflée"—they finally reached the Dauphine and the Chevalier found himself once more in disgrace at the Court of France.

King Stanislas, however, undaunted by the fiasco of Boufflers' first venture as a diplomat, continued to employ him as envoy, and sent him to congratulate the Archduke Joseph (son of the last Duke of Lorraine) on his election as King of the Romans. This time the Chevalier acquitted himself well, and his letters to Lunéville describing the ceremonies that took place at Frankfort contained no further sarcasms about royal personages.

Yet Boufflers had not the makings of a courtier ; his

sense of the ridiculous was bound to assert itself at the wrong moment, and the impulsiveness which he recognized as one of his salient characteristics was no less fatal to his success at the Courts of Europe than it would have been to his advancement in the Church.

When, in the autumn of 1764, no other diplomatic mission was forthcoming, it occurred to the Chevalier to set forth on his travels for his own pleasure.

Now at this moment, Voltaire, having quarrelled finally with Frederick the Great, was living in retirement at Ferney; but the great world was not long in following him into his retreat, and it became the fashion for the *esprits forts* of the day—both men and women—to make pilgrimages to the shrine of their idol.

Madame de Genlis, in the course of an amusing description of her own visit to the great philosopher at whose doctrines she had always professed to be shocked, was obliged to admire his philanthropy:

"He took us through the village to see the houses he had built and the benevolent institutions he had made. There he is greater than in his books; for kindly thought is everywhere to be seen, and one can hardly believe that the hand which penned so much impiety, falsehood, and wickedness should have done things so noble, wise, and useful."

This was the Voltaire that appealed to the imagination of the Chevalier de Boufflers, the Voltaire he could remember on that memorable visit to Lunéville in his childhood as one of his mother's most fervent admirers, and he started for Ferney to renew his acquaintance with the philosopher. This time he did not "set forth proudly in a postchaise," but humbly and "incognito" as the impecunious artist "Monsieur Charles" visiting Switzerland in the exercise of his profession. Already the "Chevalier de Boufflers" was well known to the world, and only by concealing his identity would

he be able to mix with the people at his ease and study the life of the country through which he passed. Boufflers' chief interest in life was always humanity, and the cause of humanity the one purpose that fired his imagination. His visit to Switzerland was therefore a revelation to him, for it was his first sight of a free and happy country.

France at this period was at its lowest ebb of misery. The peasants were ground down by taxes—*corvées*, *tailles*, and *gabelles*—whilst the nobles and the clergy were exempt from taxation. A more monstrously unjust state of affairs it is impossible to imagine—no wonder that it roused the indignation of the large-hearted Chevalier, and that the sight of the happy Swiss peasants filled him with passionate regret for the miseries of France.

The "Lettres de la Suisse"[1] that he wrote to his mother, and which afterwards became so famous, are not merely charming as descriptions of the scenery, but interesting as showing the growth of democracy in the mind of a young man belonging to a country where at this period the rights of man were still only dreamt of, and whose sole experience of life was confined to Courts and the society of the rich and frivolous. The example of Stanislas le Bienfaisant had doubtless not been without its effect, but Boufflers was a natural humanitarian; no extraneous influences were needed to bring him to a realization of the injustices of human life. He went about the world on his own account, observing, studying, and drawing his conclusions, which are delightfully recorded in the letters from Switzerland. Their literary merit may not be so high as his contemporaries believed, but they are so simple, so natural, and so curiously modern in their style that they are

[1] All the letters quoted in this chapter are taken from the "Œuvres de Stanislas de Boufflers" (Briand, Paris, 1813). They have been published several times. In the British Museum there is a copy that belonged to Horace Walpole, and is marked throughout by Walpole's hand.

well worth reading through. A further interesting point is the modernity of the descriptions they contain —they might, indeed, be dated 1915 instead of 1764, so exactly do they coincide with the social conditions of the same country to-day.

Switzerland has been undoubtedly, all through its history, the model democracy of the world; nowhere are the inequalities of birth or fortune so little apparent as in that happy country. The Chevalier de Boufflers in one sentence puts his finger on that point in Swiss human nature which, even more than its excellent schemes of government, has contributed to its prosperity.

"The Swiss and French people," he wrote from Geneva, "are like two gardeners, of which one cultivates cabbages, the other flowers." There we have it in a word! A democratic government must be above all things utilitarian, and to a large extent material—the population for which it legislates must all be content not merely to work, but to make work the primary object of life and amusement its accessory.

But if the Swiss are content to cultivate cabbages, they are not without flowers all the same: Nature provides them! Nature, in giving it enchanting lakes and mountains, serene skies and glorious sunshine, has laid out this little country as a pleasure-garden where the planters of cabbages can take their ease and enjoy their leisure moments.

The Chevalier de Boufflers, watching these contented gardeners at work, was filled with interest and admiration.

"This country," he wrote to his mother, "is not so fertile as France, but the soil is cultivated by free hands. The men sow for themselves, and do not reap for others. The horses do not see four-fifths of their corn eaten by kings. . . . The peasants are tall and strong, the peasant women strong and handsome. . . . This nation does not amuse itself much, but it employs

its time well. Here men are industrious because work is a pleasure, for they are certain to secure the profit; it is as pleasant to till the ground as to reap. The laws of the Swiss are severe; but they have the pleasure of making them themselves, and he who is hanged for breaking them has the pleasure of seeing himself obeyed by the executioner. . . . Remind the king that in the freest country in the world there is at this moment the most faithful of his subjects, and you—sing to yourself from me: 'Love me as I love you.'"

The democratic spirit of Switzerland delighted the young man who had proved so unsuccessful as a courtier:

"Here I am in the charming Pays de Vaud, on the edge of the Lake of Geneva, bordered on one side by the mountains of Valais and Savoie and on the other by superb vineyards where the vintage is now in progress. The grapes are enormous and excellent; they grow from the edge of the lake right up to the top of Mount Jura, so that at one glance I can see grape-gatherers with their feet in the water and others perched high up on the rocks almost out of sight. The Lake of Geneva is a thing of beauty! It is as if the Ocean had given Switzerland its portrait in a miniature. . . .

"The most interesting thing of all is the simplicity of manners in the town of Vevai. I am only known there as a painter, yet am treated everywhere as I am at Nancy—I go into all kinds of society, I am listened to and admired by many people who have a great deal more sense than I have myself, and am shown civilities I should only expect in Lorraine.

"The Golden Age still exists for these people. It is not worth while to be a noble lord [*grand seigneur*] in order to associate with them; it is enough to be a man. Humanity, with these good folks, is all that kinship would be with others."

This appreciation of the dignity of human nature apart from the accidents of birth or fortune, this

detestation of snobbery which made life at Courts unendurable to the Chevalier, runs through all his writings. No wonder that, as time went on, he allowed himself to be enticed by the mirage of "equality," of the "equal rights of man" that danced perpetually before the eyes of the generous-minded men of his day. For them, too, the Golden Age was to dawn, the day when tyranny should be abolished and every man should be free and happy. Alas for all the high hopes that perished in the great disillusionment the terrible future held for them! But the Chevalier, as yet, did not dream of revolutions. "Place me at the king's feet," he ends a letter to his mother, "and tell him that the sight of a free people will never lead me to rebellion. Adieu, maman; I love you wherever I am, wherever you are."

The Chevalier tells his mother gaily of all his adventures, his joy at having made a humble pair happy by painting the portrait of the wife for the husband and refusing the payment the good people pressed on him; of his delight in discovering that even in austere Switzerland "la femme est toujours femme. Non seulement la femme y est femme, mais elle est belle." Even as the impecunious painter, "Monsieur Charles," it is evident that the gallant Chevalier excelled in the game of love. "Out of thirty or forty girls or women," he writes to his mother again from Vevai, "there are not four ugly ones, and not one wanton. Oh the good and bad country!" The letter ends characteristically:

"Farewell, madame; here is a long letter, but if I added to it all the adoration that I feel for you, you would die of boredom. Place me at the king's feet, tell him of my follies, and announce the arrival of one of my letters to him in which I would rather be disrespectful than dull. Princes need to be amused more than adored. God alone has a deep enough fund of humour not to be bored by all the homages addressed to Him." (Il n'y a que Dieu qui ait un assez grand

fonds de gaieté pour ne pas s'ennuyer de tous les hommages qu'on lui rend.)

From Vevai " Monsieur Charles " made his way to Lausanne, at that date the pleasantest social centre of the country. Here lived most of the old aristocratic families, who composed a set of their own; but the lively element was to be found amongst the young people of the university—adepts in the eighteenth-century art of mingling study with frivolity. There were literary debates for discussing questions of history or philosophy, societies for essay writing, but there were always plenty of amusements—dancing and parties in winter, games and excursions in summer. At these pursuits the students were joined by a joyous band of young girls calling themselves the " Society of Spring," and who appear to have been the last word in modernity as we understand it in England to-day.

Gibbon, then a young man who spent some years at Lausanne—where he fell in love with the learned Mademoiselle Suzanne Curchod, later known to the world as Madame Necker and the mother of Madame de Staël—gives a description of this society at the date when the Chevalier de Boufflers arrived in Lausanne:

" La Société du Printemps consisted of fifteen or twenty young, unmarried ladies, of genteel, though not of the very first families, the eldest perhaps about twenty; all agreeable, several handsome, and two or three of exquisite beauty. At each other's houses they assembled almost every day, without the control or even the presence of a mother or aunt, they were trusted to their own prudence, amongst a crowd of young men of every nation of Europe. They laughed, they sang, they danced, they played at cards, they acted comedies; but in the midst of this careless gaiety they respected themselves, and were respected by the men. The invisible line between liberty and licentiousness was never transgressed by a gesture, a word, or a look, and their virgin chastity was never sullied by the breath of

scandal or suspicion. A singular institution, expressive of the innocent simplicity of Swiss manners."

It can be imagined how enormously the light-hearted chevalier enjoyed himself in this sort of society, and he writes home gaily to his mother :

"A day never passes without my receiving verses or sending them, without my painting a portrait and at the same time making an acquaintance, without my taking a cup of chocolate in the morning followed by three large meals ; in fact, I am enjoying myself so much that I wish you were in my place."

Geneva, that he visited later, was less to the Chevalier's taste. "Cité sournoise, où jamais l'on ne rit," said Voltaire and Boufflers heartily endorsed his verdict. "It is a large and dreary town inhabited by people who want neither for brains or money, but who make no use of either. What is prettiest in Geneva are the women ; they are bored to death, though they deserve to enjoy themselves."

It was December when the Chevalier arrived at Ferney and received a rapturous welcome from Voltaire.

"He received me as if I were his son," he writes again to his mother, "and shows me some of the kindness he would like to show to you. He remembers you as well as if he had only just seen you, and loves you as if he could see you. You can have no idea of all the good he does. He is the king and the father of the country in which he lives, he brings happiness to every one around him, and he is as good a father of a family as he is a good poet . . . . Whatever his printers may do, he will always be himself the best edition of his works. . . .

"The house is charming, the site is magnificent, the fare is delicate, and my room is delicious ; it has only one drawback—that it is not near yours, for, though I go away from you, I love you, and though I return to you I shall always love you.

"Voltaire talked a great deal about Panpan—and

how I like to hear him talked about!—and he ransacked his memory for the Abbé Porquet, but has never been able to find him; little gems are easy to lose. Farewell, my beautiful, good, dear mother. Love me always a great deal more than I deserve; it will still be a great deal less than I love you."

Voltaire was enchanted with his guest, and lost no time in also writing to the woman he remembered so well as the brilliant and amusing Marquise de Boufflers, the friend of his own "divine Émilie."

"I have the honour, madame, to be sheltering in my hovel the young painter you favour. You have reason indeed to love this young man; he portrays marvellously well the absurdities of this world, and he has none himself. In this respect he is said to resemble his mother; I think he will go far. I have seen young men of Paris and Versailles, but they were only daubers compared to him. I do not doubt that he will go to Lunéville to exercise his talents, and am persuaded that when you know him you will not be able to help loving him with all your heart. He has been a great success in Switzerland. A wag said he was here like Orpheus, only an enchanter of animals; but the wag was wrong. As a matter of fact, there is plenty of wit in Switzerland, and your painter's worth has been very keenly recognized.... Keep a little kind feeling for me, and accept my sincere respect.

"THE OLD SWISS VOLTAIRE."

In another letter to the Maréchal de Richelieu Voltaire describes his guest's varied manner of life:

"The Chevalier de Boufflers is one of the most original creatures in the world. He paints in pastels charmingly. He will ride off all alone at five o'clock in the morning to go and paint women in Lausanne and make friends with his models; from there he rushes off to do the same at Geneva, and then comes back to me to rest from his labours amongst the Huguenots."

It was to one of these Huguenots—a Madame Cramer —that Voltaire wrote this sonnet about Boufflers :

" . . . Mars l'enlève au séminaire
Tendre Vénus, il te sert ;
Il écrit avec Voltaire
Il sait peindre avec Hubert ;
Il fait tout ce qu'il veut faire.
Tous les arts sont sous sa loi.
De grâce, dis-moi, ma chère,
Ce qu'il sait faire avec toi. . . "

Voltaire at seventy had not lost the art of versifying, and he wrote an ode to the Chevalier :

" Croyez qu'un vieillard cacochyme,
Chargé de soixante et dix ans,
Doit mettre, s'il a quelque sens,
Son corps et son âme au régime.
Dieu fit la douce illusion
Pour les heureux fous le bel âge ;
Pour les vieux fous l'ambition,
Et la retraite pour le sage.

. . . .

" Régner est un amusement
Pour un vieillard triste et pesant,
De tout autre chose incapable ;
Mais vieux poète, vieil amant,
Vieux chanteur est insupportable.
C'est à vous, ô jeune Boufflers,
A vous dont notre Suisse admire
Les crayons, la prose et les vers,
Et les petits contes pour rire ;
C'est à vous à chanter Thémire
Et de briller dans un festin,
Animé du triple délire,
Des vers, de l'amour, et du vin."

To which the Chevalier replied :

" Je fus, dans mon printemps, guidé par la folie,
Dupe de mes désirs et bourreau de mes sens ;
Mais, s'il en était encore temps,
Je voudrais bien changer de vie ;
Soyer mon directeur, donnez-moi vos avis,
Convertissez-moi, je vous prie,
Vous en avez tant pervertis!

"Sur mes fautes je suis sincère,
Et j'aime presque autant les dire que les faire.
Je demande grâce aux amours :
Vingt beautés à la fois trahies
Et toutes assez bien servies,
En beaux moments, hélas ! ont changé mes beaux jours
J'aimais alors toutes les femmes.

. . .

" Je regrette aujourd'hui mes petits madrigaux ;
Je regrette les airs que j'ai faits pour mes belles ;
Je regrette vingt bons chevaux
Qu'en courant par monts et par vaux,
J'ai, comme moi, crevés pour elles ;
Et je regrette encore plus
Les utiles moments qu'en courant j'ai perdus. . . ."

Unfortunately, the Chevalier at twenty-six was still far from having exhausted his propensity for amorous adventures ; there were yet many little madrigals to be composed, many little songs to be sung, many more horses wearied in hasting towards the charmer of the hour before these flickering fancies dwindled in the light of a great love at last.

At this period of his life the only lasting affection of which he seemed capable was his devotion for his mother. Here are extracts from his last two letters to her from Ferney :

" I am sending you, for a present, a little sketch of Voltaire [1] losing at chess. It has neither power nor accuracy, because I did it in a hurry, and in spite of the faces he makes whenever one wants to paint him, but the character of his face has been caught, and that is the important point. . . . I am still enjoying myself here, and am still loved though I stay on. You cannot imagine how agreeable this man's [Voltaire's] society is ; he would be the best old man in the world if he were not the first among men. . . . An Englishman came here yesterday who is never tired of hearing him talk English and recite all Dryden's poems as Panpan recites the

[1] This sketch was made into an engraving in the style of Rembrandt and much sought after in Paris. I have tried in vain to find a copy for reproduction in this book.

'Jeanne.' This man is too great to be contained in the bounds of his country: he is a gift from nature to the whole earth. . . .

"I painted here a pretty simpering little woman from Geneva, with much success; and, as she was thought to be very particular, every one is on their knees to me to paint them. But I am too tired of not seeing you in the midst of all my pleasures here, to give in to their requests; it is no good trying to enjoy myself, I miss you everywhere, for I need you in all my pleasures. Farewell, Madame la Marquise; it is two o'clock, and I am dead with sleep, and I expect I am sending you to sleep too with my letter."

Madame de Boufflers, though delighted with her son's literary talent—for his letters were read by every one at Lunéville and in Paris—was far too lazy to send many replies, and in his last letter to her the Chevalier remarks: "I see that I shall have to return to Lunéville and help you to write to me." "Le plus errant des chevaliers" longed only now to wander to one spot on the earth's surface, and that was Lunéville. "You, *ma chère maman*, as you are worth more than everything that amuses me here, in order to break the bonds that keep me, send word that you are ill and want me—that would be a reason for throwing up everything and flying back to you. But don't go and put it vulgarly, for I shall be obliged to show your letter!" (N'allez pas vous y prendre grossièrement, parce que je serai obligé de montrer votre lettre.)

Apparently even at this stage of her life the pen of the marquise could hardly be trusted not to overstep the bounds of propriety, and one can only hope a decorous reply was forthcoming. It contained, at any rate, the necessary summons, for soon after the Chevalier took leave of the sorrowing Voltaire and started on his homeward journey.

"Switzerland," wrote the patriarch of Ferney to Boufflers after his departure, "is astounded by you, Ferney laments your absence, the old fellow [Voltaire

himself] regrets you, loves you, and respects you infinitely."

Boufflers' journey back to Lorraine was enlivened this time by no incident more stirring than the difficulty of throwing off his incognito. It had been quite easy to transform the Chevalier de Boufflers into the obscure "Monsieur Charles," the artist, but when it came to the artist assuming the illustrious name of Boufflers, the authorities at Geneva became suspicious and the Chevalier narrowly escaped being thrown into prison as an impostor. He succeeded, however, finally in proving his identity and made his way safely back to Lunéville.

But the days of the little Court of Stanislas were now numbered. The king was growing old, and his youthful agility was impaired not only by growing infirmity but by increasing bulk. He was, in fact, so enormous that he could hardly walk about at all, and was reduced to playing eternal *tric-trac* by way of diversion. Gradually the brilliant circle he had gathered round him dispersed, gravitating to Paris in search of gaiety.

From time to time Stanislas himself journeyed to Versailles on a visit to his dearly loved Maryczka—the poor old Queen of France, now more than ever neglected by the king and courtiers. In 1765 her life was still further saddened by the death of her only son, the Dauphin. At one moment there had seemed some hope of his recovery, and the Chevalier de Boufflers was sent as envoy to carry his grandfather's congratulations; but the Chevalier arrived too late and the poor young prince died remarking pathetically that he had never enjoyed himself or done any good in the world.

After this tragic event a still deeper gloom settled over Lunéville. Even the king's daily *tric-trac* party was deserted, and the *bourgeoisie* of Lunéville had to be lured to the Château to play with him.

Madame de Boufflers, as infuriated a gambler as her sister, Madame de Mirepoix, found the innocent game of *tric-trac* far too slow a way of losing money and

waited till the King had gone to bed to play at the more fashionable game of *faro* with her friends.

Her daughter, "la divine mignonne," was now twenty-two and as plain as ever. She had been married at sixteen to the Comte de Cucé,[1] but her marriage was as disunited as most others of the period, and she continued to live at Lunéville with her mother. A few members of the old set still remained—Panpan ever faithful, Porquet still amusing, Tressan long since recovered from the pangs of unrequited love, and one or two women, such as Madame de Lenoncourt and Madame Durival, who gathered nightly at the gaming tables of the marquise.

Madame de Boufflers, to whom excitement and variety were as the breath of life, found this new order of things very hard to bear; but she was too good-hearted to neglect the king in his lonely old age. She remained at his side during the sad days that followed the death of his grandson, the Dauphin, when he refused to have any one else near him; she was with him when he went to pray at the tomb of Queen Opalinska; she listened with patience whilst he talked incessantly, as old people are wont to talk, of his approaching end. It came at last in an unexpected way.

One cold February morning the king had risen as usual at half-past six, and, dismissing his attendants, sat down before the fire to smoke his pipe, dressed in a wadded dressing-gown of Indian silk, a present from his daughter, the Queen of France. His pipe ended, the king rose and attempted to lay it down on the high mantelpiece; but, in reaching up, the edge of his dressing-gown caught fire and in a moment the cotton wadding was in a blaze. The poor old man shouted loudly for help, but by some strange misfortune all his attendants were out of hearing; he then tried to reach the bell, but in doing so he stumbled and fell forward into the fireplace. Here he lay still in flames when an old woman

[1] Louis Bruno de Boisgelin de Cucé, known later as the Comte de Boisgelin.

employed to scrub the floors heard his moans and rushed in to the rescue. Whilst calling for help she attempted herself to put out the flames, and in the effort was badly burnt. Even in his pain the king's sense of humour did not desert him: "How strange," he remarked to her, "that, at our ages, you and I should both burn with the same flame!"

Stanislas lingered on for a fortnight, and from his death-bed dictated a last letter to his daughter Marie referring gaily to her fatal present of the wadded dressing-gown.

"You gave it to me," he said, "to keep me warm; but it has kept me too warm."

On February 23, 1766, at the age of eighty-eight, Stanislas Leczinski ceased to breathe, and, with his last breath, the life of the little Court of Lunéville ended for ever. Since then no sounds of music and laughter have echoed from the rooms looking out on the *orangerie*, for the Château was immediately turned into barracks, and to-day the great *salons*, where once the rose-coloured slippers of the Marquise de Boufflers trod so lightly, resound only to the tramp of soldiers' feet and in the noisy life of the garrison the brilliant Court of the merry monarch Stanislas le Bienfaisant is long since forgotten.

CHAPTER IV

"AN ERRANT KNIGHT"

WITH the death of Stanislas the reign of Madame de Boufflers ended and the Court of Lunéville dispersed in all directions. The Comte de Tressan, his passion cooled, at last retired to the country and the soothing occupations of growing melons and writing romances; the frivolous Porquet fled to Paris, where he became one of the chief ornaments of Mademoiselle Quinault's *salon*. Thither the Marquise de Boufflers, with her daughter and the Chevalier, followed him the next year. Madame de Boufflers' resources were now at a very low ebb, for so little had she used her influence over Stanislas to her own advantage that he had completely forgotten her in his will, and her private income, amounting to a sum equivalent to about £3,000 a year of our money, was all too inadequate for any one so careless and extravagant as the marquise. Paris, where she had many hospitable relations, seemed therefore the best place in which to recoup her shattered fortunes.

The only trouble was that Panpan could not be induced to join her! Panpan, her own tame cat, Panpan whom she positively could not do without, selfishly crept away to his house in Lunéville (No. 23, Rue d'Allemagne), and all his little comforts which nothing would induce him to forego. In vain Madame de Boufflers wrote him letters describing the attractions of Paris—"mon tendre Veau"—it will be remembered that Panpan's real name was Devaux, and the marquise had adapted it to this term of endearment—"mon

tendre Veau, je n'ai pas passé trois jours sans vous écrire." She has loved him for thirty years she tells him, and the last three years have only deepened her affection. One day she will return to Lunéville : " Je vivrai et je mourrai en Lorraine mon cher Veaux "—Madame de Boufflers' spelling was always uncertain—meanwhile Marianne, his housekeeper, must take care of him and make his jams properly. There are dozens of these little notes, disconnected and kind-hearted, like the marquise herself.

But all her grief at parting from Panpan could not damp Madame de Boufflers' enjoyment of Paris. She was still only fifty-five, and was not this in the eighteenth century the very age at which to have a really good time ? An old Court often produces a vogue in old age throughout society, and so the women who had been young with the king and led a riotous youth at the Court still held their own. Louis XV himself was old and *blasé*, the queen was given up to good works, and Versailles, in consequence, almost abandoned except on state occasions ; but the faded yet still festive beauties of a former age betook themselves to Paris, and continued to enjoy themselves as much as ever. The most influential of all these old ladies was Madame de Boufflers' aunt, the Maréchale de Luxembourg, formerly the Duchesse de Boufflers. Twenty-four years earlier the Marquise de Boufflers, as a young married woman, had arrived in Paris on a visit to her mother-in-law the old marquise, who was in perpetual mourning for her husband. The young marquise found this far from exhilarating, and would have had a very dull time indeed if the Duchesse de Boufflers—sister-in-law of the old marquise [1]—had not come to the rescue and introduced her niece to the gay world she frequented.

The duchesse, then thirty-seven and at the height of her successes, was one of the most scandalous women of her day. At the Court of the Regent her gallantries

[1] See Genealogy of the de Boufflers in Appendix.

had been of so outrageous a description that the Comte de Tressan—the lover of the Marquise de Boufflers—had immortalized her in a poem beginning with these daring lines :

> "Quand Boufflers parut à la cour
> On crut voir la Mère d'Amour.
> Chacun s'empressait à lui plaire,
> Et chacun l'avait à son tour."

The duchess, whose strongest weapon through life was an imperturbable sang-froid, declared herself delighted with the verse when it reached her ears.

"It is so clever," she remarked to the Comte de Tressan, whom she shrewdly suspected of having composed it, "that I would not only forgive the author, but I would embrace him!" The guileless Tressan immediately fell into the trap. "Well, Madame la Duchesse, it was I!" But, instead of the promised embrace, the unfortunate poet found himself soundly boxed on both ears.

The wild career of the Duchesse de Boufflers came, however, to an end in 1747, when the duc died. Three years later, she made a second marriage with the Maréchal Duc de Luxembourg, and therewith turned over a new leaf. Henceforth no one more correct than the Maréchale de Luxembourg could be imagined, and with her great name and position she had little difficulty in obliterating her abandoned past from the accommodating memory of her world. Society in its essentials remains the same throughout the ages ; like an uncertain tempered dog, it snarls loudest at the timorous. The woman who flinches is lost—let her approach it fearlessly, pat it boldly on the head, and it will lick her hand in admiration. So this amazing woman, twice a duchess, continued for thirty years to pat society on the head and in the virtuous Maréchale de Luxembourg the gallantries of the Duchesse de Boufflers were completely forgotten. Only on one fatal occasion did her past rise up and confront her with embarrassing directness ;

this was when the Comte de Vaudreuil, a young man new to the Paris world, made his first appearance at the great Hôtel de Luxembourg. The maréchale, who enjoyed collecting successful artists at her supper-parties, had heard of the Comte de Vaudreuil's musical talents, and at the end of supper turned to him, remarking graciously : " Monsieur, I hear that you sing extremely well ! I should be charmed to hear you, but pray give us no grand air, only something simple ! I love all that is natural, gay, and witty ! "

Whereupon Monsieur de Vaudreuil, who had entirely failed to realize the identity of his hostess with the notorious Duchesse de Boufflers, broke into the first line of the famous couplet :

" Quand Boufflers parut à la cour——"

The consternation of the guests can be imagined ; what was to be done to stop this terrible young man before he reached the fatal fourth line ? An outbreak of coughs, sneezes, and throat-clearings failed entirely to drown the fine, sonorous voice of the singer until, suddenly finding every eye fixed on him in strangled horror, he paused abruptly. A moment, but only one moment, of hideous silence followed before the ready wit of the Maréchale de Luxembourg came to her rescue, and in a clear and hearty voice she sang the last line herself !

The situation was saved, and every one breathed freely.

It is easy to understand that a woman with these powers of resource should be able to steer a triumphant course through life, and she became in time the supreme arbiter of *le bon air* and *le bon ton* of her day. A young woman making her début in Paris at this period must of course be formally presented at Versailles, but the impression she created at the Hôtel de Luxembourg was of far greater importance.

The arrival of the maréchale at a country house with

her retinue of servants in gorgeous liveries and her cat—known to society respectfully as "Madame Brillant"—was enough to throw the whole party into a state of nervous apprehension lest some detail of the arrangements or some indiscretion of behaviour should incur the great lady's disapproval. Yet in appearance she was far from formidable—"a quiet little woman dressed in brown taffetas with a cap and cuffs of plain hemstitched muslin and no jewels or furbelows of any kind."[1]

She was exceedingly generous to the poor; on her walks about Paris which Tronchin, her doctor, insisted on her taking daily, she used to carry gold coins in the knob of her long cane to distribute to any one who asked for alms, and at her death in 1787 she was honoured as a public benefactress.

It is evident that she was thoroughly kind-hearted, and though she might prove a formidable enemy she was certainly an invaluable friend. So the Marquise de Boufflers, reappearing in Paris under her powerful wing, found her social path made straight before her. Ere long she was enjoying herself wildly, flying from fête to fête, dining, supping, gambling, flirting, and turning night into day.

"She amuses herself as if she were only fifteen," wrote Madame de Lenoncourt, her old friend from Lorraine, to Panpan after meeting her in Paris, and she proceeds to pour forth on the maddening elusiveness of Madame de Boufflers.

"I supped three days running with your marquise; now perhaps I shall be three months without seeing her again. There are not enough card-parties in Paris, not enough princes, not enough plays for her—what time is left her? And then she maintains that she is fond of me! It enrages me—I wish I could find a good excuse for breaking with her!"[2]

[1] "Mémoires de la Marquise de Créquy."

[2] All these letters from Madame de Lenoncourt are quoted from "La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," by Gaston Maugras.

"It is impossible," Madame de Lenoncourt writes again indignantly, "to settle anything with her—she is always at the place she did not expect to be at a quarter of an hour before.... She escapes like a bird, and it is a real grief to miss her all the time and see her seldom." That was the trouble—however annoyed one might feel with her one could not get on without her! She was so tiresome, so unreliable, yet so amusing, so unlike any one else, that it was no good trying to give her up and content oneself with worthier people. Who has not met her replica in London to-day—the woman incapable of consecutive thought or of settled purpose, who light-heartedly sacrifices every one's convenience to her own amusement, yet who charms by her very irresponsibility and whose gaiety disarms resentment? The Marquise de Boufflers was a type of woman more often to be met with in our century than in her own. In those days it was still the custom to be punctilious, to keep engagements, to converse connectedly, to write carefully worded letters. Madame de Boufflers would have none of this; the whim of the moment was her only law, and though she reduced her friends to frenzy, she kept them all the same. On her arrival in Paris she had found another old friend from Lorraine who evidently absorbed her a great deal more than poor Madame de Lenoncourt. This was the Chevalier de Listenay, now the Prince de Bauffremont, who had admired her in the old days in Lunéville, and now fell hopelessly in love with her. The prince was a bachelor, and every mother in society had designs on him for her daughter; but the prince had no eyes for any one but Madame de Boufflers, whom he followed about everywhere, and refused to be lured from her side by the most tempting invitations. The Duc de Choiseul had a bet with Madame du Deffand that Madame de Boufflers would marry the prince in the end; but the duc lost, for Madame de Boufflers was enjoying herself far too much to enter on any engage-

ment so binding as marriage, and she remained a widow till her death.

As time went on her passion for gambling—the besetting vice of her family—led her more and more into debt. Wherever high play prevailed at the Maréchale de Luxembourg's, at her sister's the Maréchale de Mirepoix, at the Prince de Condé's, at the Court, the indefatigable marquise was to be found playing far into the night—even on through the next day without rising from the table; winning, then encouraged to win more; losing, then venturing another throw in the hope of retrieving losses, as gamblers have always done since the world began. It was no uncommon thing for her to lose 1,000 louis in an evening, and the Chevalier, who was often with his mother on these occasions, lost 200 louis, of which he did not possess a penny. Even the Abbé Porquet allowed himself to be carried away by the prevailing mania into losing nearly everything he had. "The Birds' frenzy for gambling is infectious," Madame du Deffand wrote after a card-party in her *appartement*, where they had played till five o'clock in the morning. "The Birds" was the term by which Madame du Deffand invariably referred in her letters to the inseparable trio: Madame de Boufflers, her daughter, Madame de Boisgelin, and her niece, Madame de Cambis; when Madame de Boufflers alone is in question she is spoken of as "the Mother Bird"—"la Mère Oiseau."

Madame du Deffand herself was too clever to ruin herself at faro or *biribi*, and she played seldom; her *salon* was far more intellectual than that of the Maréchale de Luxembourg, and so she was inclined to feel a light contempt for Madame de Boufflers' set. "The Birds," she says, "are the frivolous flock admitted indiscriminately everywhere." They were certainly foolish, these feckless birds, with their craze for gambling and indifference to anything but the claims of the passing hour, but they amused Madame du

Deffand. The "Mother-Bird" was kind-hearted too, hardly a day passed without her dropping in at the Couvent St. Joseph to enliven the old blind woman with chatter about "operas, comedies, books old and new, dress, and pompons."

Meanwhile, the Chevalier de Boufflers, still in Paris with his mother and sister, was at the height of his popularity. Every *mémoiriste* of the period refers to his *bons mots* and his verses. "The Chevalier's *bon mot* is excellent," wrote Horace Walpole to Mr. Conway: "and so is he. He has as much *bouffonnerie* as the Italians, with more wit and novelty. His impromptu verses are often admirable. Get Madame du Deffand to show you his 'Embassy to the Princesse Christine. . . .'" Madame du Deffand, who often mentions the Chevalier in her letters, had apparently a peculiar fondness for his disrespectful verses on the "Puffy Princess," for we hear of her singing them after supper to the assembled company at a party given by the King of Sweden—a strange performance for an old lady of seventy-four!

The Chevalier's own supper-parties were some of the gayest in Paris. "You have supped with the Chevalier de Boufflers," Walpole writes again; "did he act everything in the world, and sing everything in the world, and laugh at everything in the world?"

Chamfort, the wit, and author of the "Maximes," described Boufflers as he appeared at this period in the following verses:

"Tes voyages et tes bons mots,
Tes jolis vers et tes chevaux
Sont cités par toute la France;
On sait par cœur ces riens charmants
Que tu produis avec aisance;
Tes pastels frais et ressemblants
Peuvent se passer d'indulgence,
Les beaux esprits de notre temps,
Quoique s'aimant avec outrance,
Troqueraient volontiers, je pense,
Tous leurs drames et leurs romans
Pour ton heureuse négligence
Et la moitié de tes talents.

"Jouis bien d'un destin si beau,
Brille dans nos camps, à Cythère;
Sûr de plaire, et toujours nouveau
Chante les plaisirs et Voltaire;
. .
"Garde ton goût pour les voyages,
Tous les pays en sont jaloux;
Et le plus aimable des fous
Sera partout chéri des sages,
Sois plus amoureux que jamais;
Peins en courant toutes les belles,
Et sois payé de tes portraits
Entre les bras de tes modèles."

This was Boufflers as the world saw him—"le plus aimable des fous," a wit, who but for his subtlety might have been simply a buffoon, a rake, who but for his fastidiousness might have been a debauchee. In Paris no supper-party was complete without him—his strange face with the mocking mouth and small, piercing eyes was to be seen at the supper table in the gorgeous dining-hall of the Hôtel de Luxembourg with its marble floor, its gods and goddesses overhead; at Sophie Arnoult's, the actress whose lovely face Greuze has immortalized for us, or in the gilded rooms at the Louvre where "all that was most powerful and illustrious at the Court and most important in the town came reverently" to the receptions of the retired actress, the great Mademoiselle Quinault.

But there was another Boufflers—Boufflers, as his friends knew him, and of these the most devoted was that naïf and charming creature—the Prince de Ligne. "Charlot," as Boufflers called him, adored his friend. "I prefer the Chevalier de Boufflers to the whole dictionary of the Encyclopédistes!"

"He wishes, I believe, to be like the Chevalier," Madame du Deffand wrote of the Prince de Ligne; "but he has not nearly so much wit." Yet the portrait he has left us of Boufflers shows that he was no slavish imitator of his friend, and is so delightful that it must be quoted at length:

"Monsieur de Boufflers was in turn an 'abbé,' a soldier, an author, an administrator, a deputy, and a philosopher; and amongst all these callings he was only out of place in the first. Monsieur de Boufflers thought a great deal but always, unfortunately, in haste. His restlessness is what has most deprived us of his wit. . . . One would like to be able to glean all the ideas he let fall on the high-road, together with his time and his money. He had, perhaps, too much mind to be able to fix it on anything whilst the ardour of youth inspired him; this mind of his had to work on its account and subdue its master, and so he shone at first with all the fitfulness of a will o' the wisp, but age alone gave him the steadiness of a beacon. A limitless wisdom, profound subtlety, airiness that was never frivolous, the talent for giving point to ideas by the contrast of words—these are the distinctive qualities of a mind to which nothing is unfamiliar. Happily he does not know everything, but he has skimmed all kinds of knowledge, and by his depth surprises those who think him frivolous, by his lightness those who have discovered he was deep. The foundation of his character is an unbounded goodness of heart (*une bonté sans mesure*); he could not endure the idea of any suffering creature, and would give up the actual necessaries of life to help him. He would go without bread to feed even a reprobate, above all his enemy: 'Poor wretch!' he would say. He had a servant on his land whom every one denounced to him as a thief; in spite of that he kept her on, and when asked why he did so answered, 'Who would take her?' There is childishness in his laugh, and awkwardness in his bearing; he holds his head down and twiddles his thumbs in front of him like a harlequin, or else keeps his hands behind his back as if he were warming himself; his eyes, small and agreeable, seem to smile; there is something kindly in his face, something simple, gay, and naïf in his manner; there is heaviness in his figure and carelessness in his person. He sometimes has the stupid look of La Fontaine, and one would say he is thinking of nothing when he is thinking the most."

Several of his biographers have described Boufflers

as ugly, but "Madame de Créquy"[1] tells us this was a slanderous legend started by a jealous rival, the Abbé de Talleyrand, who, at the time of the publication of "Aline, Reine de Golconde," attempted to pass himself off as the author of the famous story. Boufflers, hearing of the imposture, waited till he met the Abbé de Talleyrand in the *salon* of the Duchesse de Choiseul, and then broke a pause in the conversation by asking him genially whether he happened to know the works of Rabelais.

"Obviously," the abbé said drily.

"Obviously? Yet not well!" said the Chevalier

"Dare I ask you why?"

"Monsieur l'Abbé," answered the author of "Aline" with a bow, "I asked you whether you knew the works of Rabelais because I had omitted to tell you that it was I who wrote them."

"Out of revenge for this," "Madame de Créquy" says, "the abbé went about saying everywhere that the Chevalier was intolerably ugly, and this is a point I cannot admit. Monsieur de Boufflers has nothing in his face that is not dignified and noble, intelligent and witty, and this is all that can be required of a man's appearance. . . ."

It is evident, however, that the Chevalier was by no means an Adonis; moreover, in spite of the good qualities described by the Prince de Ligne, he had several very bad faults. One was temper—he would fly into a passion on the smallest provocation, and then recover himself as quickly. His early life at Lunéville, and later on in Paris, taught him nothing of self-control or restraint, whilst morality, as we have seen, was nonexistent at this period. What wonder, then, that Boufflers, with passions intensified by an artistic temperament, flung himself into dissipation of every kind?

[1] The authorship of these Mémoires is doubtful and therefore when referred to in this book the name of Madame de Créquy appears in inverted commas.

Life in Paris at that period was, for a young man with talents, a perpetual feast, and the Chevalier was extraordinarily versatile. He rode magnificently, danced, sang, and acted brilliantly, painted, played the violin, composed neat verses at a moment's notice, and made love with all the skill and finesse of his day.

"Women revelled in him," says one of his contemporaries. "He adored them as they wish to be adored, with fury but without fidelity, for fear of boredom. He swore them eternal passions of a fortnight and he kept his word faithfully."[1]

For love, to him, was simply an art like all the rest. His love-affairs were endless; yet, if no woman at this moment had the power to hold him it was because she merely charmed his senses and never touched his heart. Many women, too, gave themselves too readily, and Boufflers was too adventurous to find pleasure in easy conquest. One day he laughingly wrote these lines to a lady who "threatened to make him happy":

À UNE JEUNE FEMME

(Qui me Menaçait de me Rendre Heureux).

"O ciel! je suis perdu! Quoi! déjà des faveurs!
Quand j'ai promis d'être fidèle,
Quand je vous ai juré les plus tendres ardeurs,
Je m'étais attendu que vous seriez cruelle;
Je m'étais arrangé pour trouver des rigueurs;
Ah! si je vous suis cher, soyez plus inhumaine;
Laissez à mon amour le charme des désirs:
Pour le faire durer, faites durer sa peine;
Je ne vous réponds pas qu'il survive aux plaisirs."

"Boufflers," says Monsieur Druon, "was really the spoilt child of his century," and certainly every one did their best to spoil him. The country houses welcomed him as rapturously as the *salons* of Paris; at Montmorency, with his great-aunt the Maréchale de Luxembourg, at L'Isle Adam with the Prince de Conti, at Chanteloup with the Duc de Choiseul, later on at Saint-

[1] "Récits d'un vieux parrain," by Charles Brifaut.

Ouen with the Duc de Nivernais, the arrival of the Chevalier was greeted with shrieks of delight. He would appear often quite unexpectedly; the guests, looking out of the windows, would suddenly perceive an odd figure on some strange screw of a horse wandering across country over hedges and ditches, and ambling finally up to the door. Behold! it was the Chevalier de Boufflers, whose recent losses at cards had reduced him to this makeshift steed. Then what laughter and rejoicings would follow, what impromptu rhyming, what glorious fooling, what rollicking songs around the harpsichord!

It was at Montmorency that Boufflers, a few years earlier, whilst still a seminarist, had encountered Jean Jacques Rousseau, who was then living at the Mont-Louis, and, whilst paving the way for the Revolution with his satires against the society he professed to despise, was basking complacently in the favour of the once profligate old maréchale. Boufflers evidently agreed with his friend the Duchesse de Choiseul in her opinion of the philosopher, whom she described as a "charlatan of virtue." Rousseau, she declared, would go to the scaffold willingly if it would add to his celebrity. To be unnoticed was the one thing he could not endure, and he was deeply mortified to find that Boufflers took no notice of him. "The Abbé de Boufflers, a young man as brilliant as it is possible to be," he says naïvely in his "Confessions," "was the only person in the maréchale's society who never paid me the least attention." He observed, moreover, that after Boufflers' visits to Montmorency his own popularity waned appreciably, his discourses appeared dull and heavy beside the abbé's sparkling wit, and even the maréchale herself seemed to think less of him. Desperate to reinstate himself, he attempted to conciliate Boufflers, with fatal results, for Boufflers only responded to his advances with a practical joke. He painted an appalling portrait of the maréchale, which she declared with truth was not in the least like her. Boufflers, so as to put Rousseau in a corner, appealed to

him for his opinion. "The portrait," says Jean Jacques, " was horrible. . . . The treacherous abbé consulted me, and, like a fool and a liar, I said the picture was a good likeness. I wanted to cajole the abbé, but I did not cajole the maréchale, who put me in her black books, and the abbé, having brought off his *coup*, made fun of me."

After this it is not surprising to find Rousseau writing acidly of our Chevalier : " He has many half-talents . . . he makes little verses and writes little letters very well, plays the timbrel, and daubs a little in pastel."

Rousseau had now left Montmorency, and Boufflers' popularity was greater than ever. Even the shy little Duchesse de Lauzun thawed in time beneath the rays of her cousin's gaiety. Amélie de Boufflers, the granddaughter of the Maréchale de Luxembourg, had married, when she was only fourteen, the dissipated Duc de Lauzun, who never showed her the least affection. Rousseau adored her. "Amélie de Boufflers," he wrote, " has the face, the gentleness, and the timidity of a virgin ; there can be nothing more pleasant or more interesting than her face, nothing tenderer or more chaste than the sentiments she inspires." She was indeed so timid—like " a little frightened bird," says Madame du Deffand—that at first her witty cousin paralysed her with terror, and she could not say a word to him. " She is as amiable as one can be by signs ! " wrote Boufflers laughingly ; but after a while they became the best of friends, and he composed verses for her so complimentary that they bathed her in blushes but met with no rebuff.

However, neither the Arcadian joys of the country houses nor the suppers of Paris satisfied for long the restless Chevalier de Boufflers, and we find him perpetually rushing off on some wild chase after adventure.

The struggle of Corsica for liberty under Paoli took him post-haste to that island.

" I have always had a fancy for revolutions [J'ai toujours eu la fantaisie des révolutions]," he wrote from Marseilles to the Duchesse de Choiseul, little

dreaming how terribly his fancy was one day to be realized. "I shall be very glad to see this poor people throw off a horrible yoke. I have formed great ideas of Paoli, of his virtues and his talents. A man who has done everything without resources, who has resisted rulers more powerful than himself, who has succeeded in governing his fellow countrymen, ungovernable hitherto, who has only used his authority to ensure the liberty of his nation, seems to me a worthy successor of the Romans and of the greatest kind of Romans."

The Chevalier was not wrong in his estimate of Paoli —a greater man than Boufflers, Napoleon Bonaparte, born the following year in Corsica, found in Paoli his earliest inspirations. Paoli became the idol of Napoleon, who, like Boufflers, shared his adoration for the Romans. But the Revolution estranged them, for Paoli could not forgive the usurper of the throne of France or the people that had committed the excesses of 1793. "The wretches!" he exclaimed to Lucien Bonaparte, "they have murdered their king! their king, the best of men! A saint, a saint, a saint! No, Corsica will have no more of them, nor will I! Let them keep their blood-stained liberty; it is not needed by my brave mountaineers. It would be better for us to become Genoese again."

These expeditions of the Chevalier's proved, of course, disastrous to his finances, and he was obliged at times to search for remunerative employment. Thus, in 1770, we find him once more soliciting a diplomatic mission through the Duc de Choiseul—who was still at that date a minister of the king—in the following characteristic letter:

"MONSIEUR LE DUC,

"I am told that the confinement of the Infanta of Parma is shortly expected, and you are too polite not to pay her a little compliment. I hasten to offer my services, as I have been thinking that you would perhaps send an 'envoy extraordinary,' and you certainly could not find one more extraordinary than myself. I am not new to politics; I had my first en-

counter with the Princess Christine, from there I went to Frankfurt to drink the health of the King of the Romans, and some time later I arrived at the death of the Dauphin to compliment him on his recovery. I feel that I have all the required ability and talents to harangue, on this occasion, the father, the mother, and even the child without a word of remonstrance from any one; but what will please me most will be to go all over Italy afterwards on the profits of my embassy and to travel on velvet. I think my plan will be much appreciated by my creditors, and I hope it will be by you also. Awaiting your reply, I am, monsieur le duc, with all respect," etc.

The duke, strange to say, declined the services of this candid ambassador, and Boufflers was obliged to cast about for some other mission. Soldiering was no doubt his natural profession, and at this moment the prospect of a campaign in Poland offered itself. The patriotic insurrection known as the "Confederation of Bar," directed against Catherine II of Russia, was just beginning, and it occurred to the Chevalier to offer his services to the Poles. Once again the cause of freedom was in question, and the idea of fighting for a small oppressed people against Catherine the Great fired his imagination.

So, bidding farewell to his friends in Paris, he set forth for the East of Europe, stopping on his way at Lunéville to pay a flying visit to his old friends Panpan and Madame de Lenoncourt.

"The Chevalier," Madame de Lenoncourt says in a letter to Paris, "arrived here yesterday from Chanteloup as mad as his mother; he is starting for Vienna, Germany, Bohemia, and has not a penny. . . . He is going to serve in the army of the Confederates in Poland, where he will be hashed or hung. Why play at the knight errant? It is most annoying."[1]

Voltaire, at that time an ardent admirer of the

[1] From "La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," by Gaston Maugras.

Semiramis of the North, as he called Catherine the Great, was equally derisive of Boufflers' latest project.

"If I were to question the Chevalier de Boufflers," he says in a letter of this date to the Empress, "I should ask him how he could be so absurd as to join those wretched confederates who are wanting in everything, above all in good sense, rather than go to pay his court to the one who will bring them to their senses. . . . I implore your Majesty to make him a prisoner of war; he will amuse you very much; there is nothing so original as he is, nor sometimes so agreeable. He will compose songs for you, he will sketch you, he will paint you. . . ." To this the great Catherine, who saw no humour in the Chevalier going to the rescue of her rebellious subjects, replied drily: "I have a remedy for dandies without a vocation who leave Paris to act as preceptors to brigands. This remedy comes from Siberia, and is taken on the spot."

But Boufflers' philosophy, unlike Voltaire's, did not include a worship of the great. He had, as we have seen, none of the talents of a courtier; his sympathies were always with the weak and oppressed.

Unfortunately, he was destined to disillusionment, for the Poles whose cause he had taken up with so much fervour proved churlish and ungrateful. Arriving on the frontier of Poland, he found nothing ready for the campaign, and the forces he had been promised were not forthcoming.

"The Polish marshals," he wrote, "laugh at the Confederation; they take every one's money and no one's orders." And so, instead of the fighting he had hoped for, the Chevalier found himself condemned to a maddening inactivity. "Hard work is nothing, but the tedium of contradiction, the continual realization of one's own helplessness, the ingratitude of the people one serves, the ill-will of those on whom one depends, are torture to the soul."[1]

[1] From "La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," by Gaston Maugras

At last, in desperation, he threw up his post with the army and made his way back to Austria. For some months he wandered about, in Hungary, Silesia, Bohemia welcomed at many of the châteaux in the countries through which he passed, yet always restless and dissatisfied in his search for a purpose in life, always thwarted in his belief in human nature.

The Hungarians proved no less disappointing than the Poles.

"Whatever good qualities one may attribute to Messrs. the Hungarians," wrote the Chevalier, "believe me, that they are the sorriest soldiers in Europe—lazy, mean, selfish, vain, and silly. Add to that they are dirty, coarse, and rascally—and then love them!"

And so Boufflers, sane, and cynical returned to Paris, where, like many another disappointed man of strong passions, he flung himself once more into dissipation.

And then suddenly something happened that changed the whole current of his life. He went one evening—as he had done a hundred times before—to a party at the Maréchale de Luxembourg's.

In the splendid rooms, with their dim gold and wonderful paintings, their carved lions of the Luxembourg and heraldic eagles of the Montmorency, the lights from a myriad of blazing candles lit up the brilliant crowd he knew so well. As he moved amongst them many women turned their powdered heads towards him; exquisitely artificial smiles greeted him; pretty, provoking eyes drew from him the usual graceful compliments. And then, all at once, he found himself looking into a small, whimsical face—the face of a very fair woman framed in an aureole of glorious hair. Who was she? The young Comtesse de Sabran, of whose wit and beauty he must often have heard, though they had never chanced to meet before. But now, as she raised her eyes to his—such wonderful blue eyes, half tender and half mocking!—Boufflers' heart stood still with joy and wonder, for in their inmost depths he read the realization of his dreams.

BOOK II

THE GOLDEN AGE

CHAPTER I

"FLEUR DES CHAMPS"

ONE March day of 1749, twenty-eight years before this fateful evening at the Hôtel de Luxembourg, the life of Eléonore de Sabran had begun on a tragic note. Her mother, the beautiful Mademoiselle de Montigny, had married a stern and selfish man, Monsieur de Jean de Manville, with whom she found no happiness. She longed for a child to fill her empty life, but when at last this wish was realized it brought her only bitter disappointment; the little girl born to her was lovely, but as time went on Madame de Jean made the piteous discovery that her intellect was defective. After this she had only one desire—that another child might be sent to comfort her; but this hope, too, was destined to end in tragedy, for on giving birth to a second daughter —lovelier than the first, and with every sign of a brilliant intelligence—Madame de Jean died. And so Eléonore and her weak-minded sister were left motherless. Their father, sterner than ever, left them always with the servants and the two poor little sisters lived out their lonely childhood with never a loving word or a caress.

From time to time, however, a coach would draw up at the door of the house from which an old lady descended. This was their grandmother, Madame de Montigny, who considered it her duty to come and see

to the welfare of her daughter's children. Little Eléonore's heart always beat painfully on these occasions, for Madame de Montigny was a really terrible old lady. She believed in no sentimental nonsense with regard to children. "Fear," she was wont to say, "should be the foundation of all education."

So, whilst the two trembling babies made their curtsies and timidly kissed the hand held out to them, she would look at them sternly, deliver a reproof whenever possible, and then, with her stiff brocade gown rustling as she moved, sweep out of the room and drive away again in her coach.

But worse was still to come. A year or two later Monsieur de Jean married again!

This was the beginning of a dreadful time for the children, for the new Madame de Jean proved the traditional stepmother, and the necessaries of life were actually denied them. At this even the stern grandmother was roused to wrath.

"My daughter's children neglected, ill-fed, without proper clothes? The thing is intolerable!" Without more ado the strong-minded old lady ordered the children to be dressed in their cloaks and hats, and, calmly packing them into her coach, drove off with them to her house in the Rue des Vieilles-Audriettes. Nothing would induce her to let them return to their father again.

Here at last one ray of comfort came to poor little Eléonore, for Madame de Montigny had a son who lived with her and who turned out to be the kindest of fairy uncles. He soon became devoted to Eléonore, but so great was the power of old women at that period that even a middle-aged man stood in awe of his mother, and it was only by stealth that Monsieur de Montigny dared to show any affection for his niece.

One glorious day, however, he did a bold thing, for he made her a present of the loveliest little dog, called Zina, which Eléonore took immediately to her heart, and, like the other lonely child of this story—Stanislas de Bouf-

flers, who had found a friend in Pataud—she took to confiding in Zina. "I told her quite quietly all my troubles when my heart was full," Eléonore wrote long afterwards. "Zina seemed to understand her mistress's grief, and licked my hands when she saw me crying."

At last the time came for the two children to be sent away to a convent according to the custom of the day, and Zina was allowed to go with them. Life in many eighteenth-century convents was very gay; the abbess and sisters were usually women of the world, far from austere, who entertained the most frivolous society of Paris in the convent parlours, and initiated the young girls committed to their care into the *bon ton* and *le bel usage* which was to fit them to take their place in the world. The convent chosen, however, for the little de Jean de Manvilles—le Couvent de la Conception, 354 Rue Saint-Honoré—was apparently not of this light-hearted order, for the nuns proved hardly less severe than the grandmother.

At first all went well, but after a few days the schoolgirls, having discovered the elder sister's mental weakness, were brutal enough to make her the butt of their jokes, and the child, dimly realizing she was being made fun of, flew to her younger sister for protection. Eléonore, we are told, "defended her bravely against the big girls, fighting like a little lion with *pensionnaires* a head taller than herself, and soon, by dint of feet and fists, forced them to leave in peace the poor sister she cared for and protected like a mother."

Eléonore de Jean at this period was so pretty and charming, so spirited and warm-hearted, that even the nuns in time could not refrain from spoiling her a little, and the kindness they showed her ended by rousing the resentment of her companions, who determined to injure her in the eyes of their superiors. Accordingly several unruly spirits who had amused themselves in playing practical jokes upon the nuns succeeded in throwing the blame on Eléonore: whereupon the nuns, indignant at

what they believed to be the ingratitude of their favourite, determined on a terrible punishment. Zina, the adored Zina, into whose velvet ear Eléonore had poured all her troubles, was taken away from her and handed over to the gardener, a rough, brutal sort of man, into whose tender mercies the little girl saw her dog confided, with a sinking heart. All through the night that followed she wept bitterly and early in the morning ran down to the gardener's cottage to find out if all was well; but, alas! her worst fears were realized, for the gardener, with a callous laugh, informed her that he had killed Zina! Pale and trembling, she fled back to the house and threw herself on her bed in an agony of grief.

Every one who as a child has loved a dog, and, through dark hours that only come to unloved children, has felt its exquisite powers of sympathy, will understand her despair. Zina, her one, her faithful friend, cruelly murdered—did Zina know, did Zina understand that the mistress she had trusted was powerless to protect her against the brutal crime? Such agonizing questions recurred again and again to the mind of Eléonore lying in her narrow convent bed sobbing passionately through the long days and nights that followed, until at last she became so ill with grief that even the nuns repented of their severity. It was true that, as they hastened to explain, the gardener had acted on his own initiative and was now dismissed for his cruelty, yet they realized uneasily that they were to blame for having placed the dog in his keeping. Since, however, in ungenerous natures to realize one has wronged another person is to increase one's resentment against them, the nuns loved Eléonore less than ever in consequence of this tragic event, and their ill-will was further increased by the fact that the story of Eléonore and the murdered Zina spread through Paris and raised a storm of indignation.

By the time the little girl was well enough to come downstairs public sympathy expressed itself in a tangible form, and dogs of all shapes and sizes poured into the

convent parlour as offerings to Zina's mistress. But neither the most engaging of pugs nor the friendliest of spaniels could console her for her loss; Eléonore tearfully shook her head, declaring that no dog could ever take the place in her heart that Zina had occupied, and she refused them all.

When the new year came Eléonore was still under the ban of the nuns' displeasure. It was the custom at the convents for the *pensionnaires* to write home letters of congratulation to their parents on this occasion, and since letter-writing at this period was an exceedingly formal affair, the nuns were wont to provide a model letter in the stilted and ceremonious language of the day. This year, however, Eléonore, being in disgrace, was denied the doubtful privilege of copying the model letter and was told that she must compose one on her own account to send to her father. This was terribly alarming—how was a little girl to remember all the pompous phrases and laboured compliments her stern parent would expect? Then, suddenly a bright idea came to her. Madame de Sévigné, she remembered, had written the finest letters in the French language, so, since the nuns of the Conception would not help, why not have recourse to the aid of the celebrated marquise? Luckily a volume of the letters was to be found in the convent library, and Eléonore, soon deep in its contents, made an astonishing discovery. The art of letter-writing lay simply in writing as one talked! Here in these immortal letters were no tortured phrases, no profound reflections, but just the thoughts and feelings of a clever and warm-hearted woman who wrote of what she saw and heard around her. Why should not she, Eléonore de Jean de Manville, do the same—forego the formalities contained in the model letter, and just write to her father as if she were talking to him? Taking up her pen, she let herself go and then awaited anxiously M. de Jean's verdict. To her delight, her father declared that she had never written a better expressed letter, and inquired the reason

of this sudden improvement in her style. This was not calculated to allay the nuns' irritation, and when Eléonore, encouraged by the success of her first effort, embarked on a correspondence with her friend Marie de Bavière [1] at the convent, by way of improving her new-found talent, the nuns were so displeased that they sentenced both the writers to have the letters they had written each other folded into the shape of donkeys' ears and tied on to their heads during lesson hours. One wonders whether these hard and dreary women lived to realize their want of discernment towards the girl who was to become the author of letters that a hundred and thirty years later were described as " some of the jewels of French prose." [2]

Eléonore de Jean, like the heroine of a fairy story, was condemned all through her childhood to incessant cruelty—stepmother, grandmother, nuns, one after one contrived to make her life miserable, yet never succeeded in spoiling her charming nature. There was never a less " blighted being " than Eléonore.

When at last the two sisters left the Couvent de la Conception it was to return once more to the rigid rule of their grandmother. Madame de Montigny's arrogant manner had not softened during the three years the little girls had spent at the convent, and now that poor Eléonore was once more at her mercy all the old bullying began again, every fit of ill-temper the old lady experienced was vented on her unfortunate granddaughter, and even the kind uncle could do little to make her life bearable, as on one fatal occasion he tried to do. Eléonore, being a perfectly natural girl, loved pretty things and she had often longed for one of the bouquets of artificial flowers it was just then the fashion to carry in one's hand. One day, to her joy, her uncle made her a present of one of these bouquets—the loveliest she had ever seen ! She was so pleased with

[1] Later the Marquise de Hautefort.

[2] " Life of Madame de Staël," by Lady Blennerhassett.

it that when the moment came to go out with her grandmother in the coach she could not bear to be parted from it and took it with her to beguile the tedium of the drive. All the way she kept on looking at it, admiring each flower separately, when suddenly her grandmother turned on her and exclaimed angrily :

"Eléonore! You are carrying flowers, and you know they always make my head ache!"

"But, madame, they have no smell, for they are artificial!"

"I tell you they make my head ache!"

"Madame, it is impossible, since they are not real——"

"Do not argue with me. I forbid you to carry flowers!" And, before Eléonore could say another word, Madame de Montigny had snatched the bouquet from her hand and thrown it out of the carriage window.

Eléonore, with tears in her eyes, saw her lovely flowers lying in the mud of the Paris street and the coach rolled on, leaving them to be crushed by the wheels of the next carriage that passed that way. At seventeen such griefs as these are very bitter and poor Eléonore had few pleasures to brighten the monotony of her life.

A point that was always a matter of discord between Eléonore and her grandmother was her affection for her father. He cannot have been a very lovable person, but for all that she adored him—perhaps because, as she tells us, she had no one else to love.

Madame de Montigny hated her son-in-law, and nothing enraged her more than the little attentions Eléonore showed him from time to time. Once, when she had spent two months over some drawings for him, the grandmother discovered her at work and threw them all into the fire. Meanwhile the stepmother, furiously jealous of Eléonore, was equally determined to prevent her seeing anything of her father.

The two women between them did everything they

could to keep Monsieur de Jean and his younger daughter apart, but Eléonore firmly persisted in going every day to visit him.

One morning she arrived as usual, and was just about to go in at the door, when the servant told her that Monsieur de Jean had gone out.

" I will come in and wait for him."

The footman looked very much embarrassed, and murmured something about Monsieur de Jean being expected in late.

" Then I will return later," she said; but at that moment the abbé who lived with the de Jeans—in those days a tame abbé was *de rigueur* in every well-conducted house—came out of Monsieur de Jean's study, and suddenly the girl understood the situation. Her father was at home and would not see her !

" Monsieur l'abbé," she said going up to him in the passage with tears in her big blue eyes, " you were with my father ? "

" Yes," the abbé said gently.

" And he refuses to see me ! " cried Eléonore, bursting into a passion of weeping.

" Her tears," said the abbé afterwards, describing the scene, " covered her lovely face, she hid her head in her hands, and in her agitation the comb that with difficulty held up her wealth of hair fell out, and a forest of fair hair forming a unique contrast to her brown eyebrows and long black lashes, covered her from head to foot like a thick mantle."

The kind abbé, cut to the heart at the sight of her distress, walked home with her through the streets and did his best to console her. In answer to her questionings he was obliged to admit that her stepmother was the cause of Monsieur de Jean's refusal to admit her; she had succeeded in persuading her husband that old Madame de Montigny's animosity towards him was shared by Eléonore.

The poor child implored the abbé to contradict this

monstrous accusation, and reached home comforted by his promise to do what he could to put the matter right; but his intervention was not needed, for a short time after this Madame de Jean died, and Eléonore was now able to hope that nothing would prevent her father from seeing her, or possibly from offering a home to his two children.

She waited anxiously, daily expecting a summons from Monsieur de Jean; but a fresh obstacle lay in the way of her happiness.

It appeared that her father, always dominated by stronger natures, had fallen under the influence of a certain Chevalier who was nothing more than an adventurer and who determined to acquire some portion of Monsieur de Jean's large fortune. Having for months frequented the house and acquired control over the old man's weak will, he now made the infamous proposal that he should marry the elder of Monsieur de Jean's two daughters, whose feeble-mindedness would offer no obstacle to his schemes. By this arrangement he and his wife would live with Monsieur de Jean, whilst Eléonore would remain on with her grandmother.

Eléonore's indignation at this plot may be imagined, but she was powerless to oppose it, and the marriage would certainly have taken place had not her poor sister died suddenly at the very moment fixed for the wedding. The Chevalier, finding himself baulked of the fortune he hoped to acquire through his wife, had no intention of allowing this trifling misadventure to interfere with his plans and calmly proposed to Monsieur de Jean that he should now marry Eléonore instead of her sister.

In the eighteenth century marriages were arranged by the parents of the young couple concerned without any reference to their wishes, and in many cases the future husband and wife met for the first time on the day of their marriage. But Eléonore de Jean, for all her gentleness, was less docile than most girls of her

period, and she had no intention of being handed over to anybody without her own consent, so when the Chevalier, having secured her father's approval of his plan, presented himself at Madame de Montigny's for an interview with his future bride, an unpleasant surprise awaited him. Eléonore possessed not only a firm will, but a fiery temper, and the sight of this miserable fortune-hunter roused her to so much indignation that she told him in scathing terms what she thought of his proposal, and it was a very abject and resentful man who made his way out of Madame de Montigny's *salon*.

Needless to say, the baffled Chevalier henceforth did his best to injure Eléonore in the opinion of Monsieur de Jean, and she was beginning to despair of ever taking any place in her father's affections, when Monsieur de Jean was suddenly struck down with paralysis and the doctors ordered him to go and take the waters at Bourbon-l'Archambault. Here at last was Eléonore's opportunity; the desire to take care of any one old or ill or helpless was always one of her strongest characteristics, and she determined now to go with her father and look after him through his illness.

Her grandmother was furious at the suggestion.

"You must choose between your father and me—if you go with him I will never see you again as long as I live."

The threat held little terror, for life had not been too sweet under Madame de Montigny's roof. But with the innate courtliness of her day she answered gently:

"Deeply as that would grieve me, madame, my choice is made. I must follow my father."

"And what will happen to you if your father dies at Bourbon?" Madame de Montigny asked coldly. "I shall go into a convent," said Eléonore and her uncle, Monsieur de Montigny, her one friend in this stern household, who was in the room during this conversation, could not refrain from applauding her decision.

So poor Eléonore, with all the courage and inex-

perience of her seventeen years, set off with her father and his retinue of servants to the baths of Bourbon l'Archambault, very proud and happy to have the old man in her charge and free at last to show him all the affection she had felt for him and of which he was, alas! so unworthy. No sooner had he completed his cure, owing to Eléonore's care and devotion, and returned to Paris once more in good health, than he fell again under the influence of the rascally Chevalier, and his daughter was obliged at last to realize that it was useless to attempt to counteract the adventurer's power over the old man.

Madame de Montigny, who had not carried out her threat of refusing to see her granddaughter again, received her back on her return to Paris. Eléonore was now nineteen, an age that in the eighteenth century was already quite mature, and the question of a marriage for her must be seriously considered. Monsieur de Jean, at the instigation of the Chevalier, sent various impossible aspirants to pay their court to the lovely Mademoiselle de Jean, who, as they all well knew, would inherit a large fortune on the death of her father. Needless to say, these gentlemen shared the same fate as their accomplice the Chevalier, and retired one and all discomfited, nor did the eligible young men approved by Madame de Montigny meet with any better success.

Eléonore, as a matter of fact, could not bear young men, and certainly most young men of her day were far from inspiring confidence. These scented, powdered, and brocaded exquisites who paid her well-turned compliments and appeared so deeply impressed by her charms would, she knew, find other charms far more alluring a few months after marriage. Love between husbands and wives was in their philosophy only for the *bourgeoisie*, and marriage was merely an arrangement out of which one should secure the greatest possible advantages.

Wise little Eléonore had no intention of being married

for her money and then neglected. If she married any one it should be some one who would love her for herself—some one to whom she would be necessary. She had always been unloved, poor child, and she could not face the prospect of a loveless marriage. Now, amongst the guests who came most often to the house of Madame de Montigny was a very famous and distinguished person—the old Comte Elzéar Joseph de Sabran-Grammont, Seigneur de Beaudinar, who had covered himself with glory in the Seven Years War. He was a magnificent-looking man, this old sailor, now nearly seventy, with his white hair and stern, well-cut features that softened strangely when he talked to Eléonore on his visits to her grandmother. Eléonore admired him immensely. Was he not the great Comte de Sabran, bearer of one of the most splendid names in France,[1] whose prowess on the sea had made him the admiration of the world?

Everybody knew the story of his career: how, as commander of the *Content*, he had won a victory over Admiral Byng, and later, when in command of the *Centaure*, had taken part in one of the most terrible naval battles of his day. The *Centaure*, cruising off the coast of Gibraltar, was attacked by four British ships, but for seven hours the gallant commander defended himself against the enemy; with broken masts and torn sails, and with eleven bullet-wounds in his own body, he held on valiantly until all his ammunition was exhausted and the last cannon had been charged with his silver plate. Then only, when the ship began to sink and he saw no further hope of saving the crew, he was obliged to surrender; but the English, sportsmen

[1] The de Sabrans dated from 993, and were therefore about the seventh oldest family in France. They had many illustrious ancestors—Guillaume de Sabran, who fought in the first Crusade; Garsande de Sabran, wife of Alphonse II, Comte de Provence, who held a *salon* in the twelfth century, and whose granddaughter Marguerite was the wife of Saint Louis; also Elzéar de Sabran, who was canonized. It has been said that every royal house of Europe is descended from a Sabran.

as they have always been throughout their history, were filled with admiration of their heroic adversary, and showed him every respect and consideration during the two months that he spent as prisoner of war. At the end of that time he returned to France, and Louis XV, receiving him in a private audience at Versailles, presented him to the Queen and Dauphin with the words : " The Comte de Sabran is one of ourselves ! "

To the romantic imagination of Eléonore de Jean it is no wonder that the Comte de Sabran appeared more interesting than the frivolous young men who were proposed to her as *partis*.

He was so kind and so charming that by degrees she began to treat him as a friend and tell him of her troubles, to which he listened sympathetically, never dreaming that this lovely child could think of him as other than a father.

Eléonore was curiously innocent. With all her cleverness she knew little of the world, and it is probable that she understood nothing about marriage, when it occurred to her that it would be perfectly delightful to spend her life with this dear old friend. The more she thought about it the more the idea took hold of her mind. If they wanted her to marry some one, why not the one man for whom she could feel real affection ?

She determined at last to ask the advice of her uncle, and the following morning Monsieur de Montigny received a message asking him to come to her room.

Eléonore, as fresh as a rose, her beautiful fair hair unpowdered, and wearing a morning wrapper, received him with a smile.

" You sent for me . . . ? " he began wonderingly.

" Yes," she said, " for you care for me—I can confide in you."

And then she told him of the great idea that had come to her. Here, in this household of her grandmother's, she was so alone and friendless ; her father cared nothing for her ; what was she to do ?

"There is nothing for it," she ended; "I must marry." And, whilst her uncle wondered which of the many *partis* suggested she had decided to accept, she added calmly: "I have found the man who will be my protector and my guide—the Comte de Sabran!"

"But," murmured M. de Montigny, amazed at this announcement, "you are only nineteen and he is sixty-nine!"

"I shall be everything to him—he will love me—he will protect me!" Eléonore repeated, and nothing would persuade her to reconsider her decision—the Comte de Sabran was the only man she could think of marrying! Monsieur de Montigny finally agreed to discuss the matter with his mother and Monsieur de Jean, and, having secured their approval, proceeded to sound the Comte de Sabran on his feelings for Eléonore. The old man made no secret of his admiration for her, but had never hoped that he could be accepted as a lover. However, when Monsieur de Montigny delicately conveyed to him that this was not altogether impossible, the gallant admiral, who had lost none of the ardour of youth, dashed off immediately to ask Eléonore to marry him. Eléonore received him with an enchanting smile, and in answer to his proposal said that nothing would please her better than to become his wife. The Comte could hardly believe in his good fortune, and since at sixty-nine one cannot afford to wait long for happiness, he lost no time in making Eléonore de Jean the Comtesse de Sabran.

At the time of her marriage Eléonore, still a child, with unawakened passions, was perfectly happy, happier than she had ever been in her short, sad life. Released at last from the petty tyrannies and vexations that had made existence so wretched, peace seemed to her the greatest blessing in the world.

At first, too, the change from the position of a repressed and slighted girl to that of a great lady brought

with it much amusement and excitement. The Comte de Sabran hastened to present his young wife at the Court, and this, in the leisurely days of the eighteenth century, was no hurried affair such as presentation at Court means to us—a moment's appearance before the royal presence, a few curtsies, and a graceful exit; it entailed the spending of several days and nights at the Château of Versailles and taking part in all kinds of festivities. Presentation to the king came first, then visits to the apartments of all the royal family in turn during meal-time—a custom to our minds strangely suggestive of a visit to the Zoo—and in the evening the débutante must take her place on one of the stools arranged around the royal card-table—a privilege accorded only to the highest rank and known as the *droit des tabourets*; or she must figure in a *contre-danse* at a ball in the great Galerie des Glaces.

It was all very brilliant and wonderful to the girl who had seen nothing of the world, this dazzling Court with its perpetual pageants—trumpets blowing fanfares, guards in sixteenth-century uniforms drawn up in the marble courtyard when the king went a-hunting; rows of brilliantly attired courtiers and ladies in immense silken paniers forming a hedge down the length of the long Galerie when his Majesty went to mass; an exotic world of exquisite delicacy and stately beauty such as we to-day can only dream of, and that, as Taine remarks, must have been seen if we would realize the "triumph of monarchic culture." It was no slight ordeal to make one's first appearance before such an audience—an audience none too kindly in its verdicts—and several *mémoiristes* have recorded their feelings of terror when, as young girls with the unaccustomed pile of powdered hair on their heads, and the unwieldy paniers attached to their waists, they faced the fire of all these critical eyes. Eléonore de Sabran was, in fact, so overcome with shyness that she persistently hid herself behind the women with the largest paniers in the room in order

to escape attention. She need not have feared criticism, for the Court thought her charming.

"Her virtues," said the Prince de Ligne, "are so natural, so simple that one takes them only for accomplishments. . . . She brought into the world so much candour and such ignorance of evil that everything must be a surprise to her native innocence."

There must have been many surprises for so guileless a mind at the Court of Louis XV in that fateful year of 1769. Ever since the death of Madame de Pompadour, five years earlier, life at the Court had been terribly dull; but now a whisper went round that a fresh fancy had fired the jaded passions of the king, and that before long a new beauty would make her appearance at the Court. Rumour proved correct, for just after Eléonore de Sabran's presentation the Comtesse du Barry burst upon the disgusted world of Versailles. Here in this historic gallery, where the Roi Soleil had shone in his splendour and Madame de Montespan, in her dress of "gold on gold, worked with more gold," had won the unwilling admiration of Madame de Sévigné, a *grisette* was to be seen as the favourite of the king, a girl straight from the underworld of Paris, the toast of hair-dressers and valets, who but a short time ago was doling out ribbons behind the counter of Labille, now moved, insolent and triumphant, between the rows of courtiers ranged along the Galerie des Glaces—the courtiers who derisively hummed the refrain attributed by some people to the Chevalier de Boufflers [1]:

"Lisette, ta beauté séduit
Et charme tout le monde;
En vain la duchesse rougit
Et la princesse gronde;
Chacun sait que Vénus naquit
De l'écume de l'onde."

Two or three duchesses and princesses did more than blush and scold; they signified, with icy politeness, that

[1] "Madame du Barry," by Claude Saint-André, p. 43.

they felt their presence at the Court to be superfluous, and, shaking the dust of Versailles from their satin slippers, retired to their country houses to form courts of their own at which the great world assembled. Amongst those who did not leave or even protest was, unhappily, the Chevalier de Boufflers' aunt, the Maréchale de Mirepoix, who, up to her ears as usual in gambling debts, could not afford to offend the king, and, to the fury and disgust of her family, took the new favourite under her protection.

What did Eléonore de Sabran think of all these things, peeping out from behind the protecting paniers? Did she understand, or wonder, like that other innocent girl, the Dauphine Marie Antoinette who arrived in France a year later, "What was precisely Madame du Barry's office at the Court?" Did she guess anything of the misery as well as the vice that lay behind the outward splendour of Versailles—the half-starved servants in the palace, the ruined tradesmen, the disaffection that was growing steadily in the minds of the courtiers themselves?

"Things will last my time!" said the king, with atrocious cynicism, and the favourite, in her gilded attics, served to charm away an occasional mood of remorse that overcame him at the thought of the impending deluge.

It is probable that the extraordinary innocence of Eléonore de Sabran kept her from these visions, for in all her writings she has told us nothing of her impressions at the Court of Louis XV.

We know, however, that she was an immense success there; her charm and wit, her "blue eyes irised with brown," her tiny feet on which she danced so divinely in minuets and *contre-danses*, became some of the chief topics of conversation. When she appeared in the great Galerie des Glaces beside her husband—a gallant figure for all his white hair and stooping shoulders, yet old enough to be her grandfather—every one

smiled; yet it was not a smile of derision. These people, accustomed to laugh at innocence, found Eléonore's innocence piquant and refreshing; her wit and charming manners saved her from the *gaucheries* of inexperience. Into this exotic atmosphere she brought a breath of such freshness and simplicity that in time she became known amongst them by the affectionate sobriquet of " Fleur des Champs "—the name by which the Prince de Ligne and other of her contemporaries refer to her.

The curé of Saint-Roch, who believed in turning beauty to account, was in the habit of inviting the most attractive women at the Court to make a collection after mass for the poor of his parish. The year before the marriage of Eléonore, the celebrated Comtesse d'Egmont had performed this office, and by her *beaux yeux* raised a large sum for the curé's charities; but now the fame of the young Comtesse de Sabran reached the curé's ears, and he lost no time in enlisting her services in the cause of his poor.

The curé's scheme succeeded beyond his wildest expectations, for the church was so packed with people eager for a glimpse of the new beauty that she was hardly able to make her way through the crowd. As each golden louis was dropped into the alms-bag she rewarded the giver with a smile so charming that the organist, looking down from the organ-loft, resolved not to be left out, and hurriedly forsook his post to win a smile for himself as he added his louis to the rest.

The last year's beauty, Madame d'Egmont, hearing of the large sum collected by her successor, hastened to the presbytery to find out the exact amount, and was obliged to admit herself beaten—the *beaux yeux* of Madame de Sabran had proved more potent than her own! But women in eighteenth-century France were often extraordinarily generous to each other's attractions, and Madame d'Egmont was quite ready to congratulate her successful rival.

Madame de Sabran, all through her life, seems to have been as much appreciated by women as by men; she was too far removed above the intrigues and the scandals, that made up the lives of many of her sex to incur their jealousy. She had no need for the advantages for which they were scheming; she did not want their lovers.

The young courtiers who, on seeing her at first with her old husband, had hoped to find her willing to embark on *bergeries*, were indeed sadly disappointed, for Eléonore turned a deaf ear to the most exquisitely worded compliments, whilst amorous glances only met with gentle mockery. "Fleur des Champs" was lovely, they decided, but hopelessly unapproachable; her marriage, they discovered, was not one of convenience; she was really devoted to the Comte de Sabran!

This fact, however surprising it might seem to the *séducteurs* of the Court, was nevertheless true. At the end of her visits to Versailles, Eléonore was perfectly content to drive away in her gilded coach out of the great Cour de Marbre with the dear old man at her side. She was so proud of him—this hero of the *Centaure*, with his "majestic" features and courtly manners, who showed her such tender care. As time went on it was her turn to care for him, for his health was failing. Eléonore's heart always went out to the weak and helpless, and she nursed him as devotedly as she had nursed her father at Bourbon l'Archambault; but when, a year later, a little daughter was born to her—a lovely cherub with golden hair and blue eyes like her own—her happiness was complete. Often, remembering the tragedy of her own birth, she would press the little creature to her heart and murmur as she kissed it passionately: "Thou, at any rate, shalt know a mother's love!"

The little girl was christened Louise Eléonore Melanie, but she was never called anything but Delphine, evi-

dently in memory of the famous ancestress of the de Sabrans, Delphine de Signe who lived in the fourteenth century, and became the wife of Elzéar de Sabran, canonized later for his " sublime virtues." So when, four years after the birth of Delphine, a little son was born to Eléonore de Sabran, it was natural he should be called Elzéar.

Elzéar came into the world so weak and delicate that at first his life was almost despaired of, and though his mother's care enabled him to live, he was all through his childhood too precocious and highly strung for happiness.

The old admiral, however, was delighted at the birth of his heir.

" Now," he cried, " I have nothing left to wish for ! " He lived only a year to enjoy his happiness.

Just a week before the birth of Elzéar, Louis XV had died, and the following summer Madame de Sabran was summoned to Rheims for the coronation festivities. She had many friends in the Court of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette—two had been with her at the Convent of the Conception, Madame de Tourzel and Madame de Hautefort, who, as Marie de Bavière, had corresponded with Eléonore and incurred the nuns' displeasure ; Madame Clothilde, the sister of Louis XVI, popularly known as " Gros Madame " on account of her immense size, had a great affection for Madame de Sabran ; so, too, had Madame de Marsan, her lady-in-waiting, and therefore, though Madame de Sabran had no post at the Court, she was invited to go with it on this great occasion.

She never forgot the gorgeous ceremony that inaugurated this ill-fated reign. Amongst the brilliant crowd gathered in the great cathedral, she watched with eyes of wonder the crown of Charlemagne glittering with precious stones placed on the young king's head, heard the dim vaults echo to the cries of " Vive le Roi ! " whilst at the same moment, according to

immemorial custom, a number of birds were let loose as a symbol that "men are never more happy than under the rule of a just and enlightened prince."

So great was the emotion, so passionate the loyalty of the people for the royal pair who were to take the place of the dissolute old king that the queen fainted away and had to be carried out into the air.

Madame de Sabran had just returned from the ceremony when a despatch was brought to her containing sad news. The Comte de Sabran, whose failing strength had prevented his going with her to Rheims, had been struck down in her absence by a paralytic stroke. She lost no time in hastening to his side, but arrived too late; when she reached home the old husband she had chosen and loved so tenderly had breathed his last. Eléonore shed many bitter tears, and for a year she lived in complete seclusion at the house of her husband's nephew, the Bishop of Laon.

Monseigneur de Sabran was only thirty-six, and though, unlike many prelates of his day, his morals were irreproachable, he was thoroughly a man of the world, and life at his summer palace—the Château d'Anizy, ten miles from Laon—was pleasant as well as peaceful.

During the quiet year Madame de Sabran spent at Anizy with her children she took the opportunity to improve her talents, she drew and painted, read a great deal, taught herself Italian, and played the harpsichord. Her friends, coming from Paris to see her, found her lovelier than ever in her black gown and the black veil draped around her golden head.

"Come back to Paris!" they begged at last. "How long must so much charm and beauty remain buried in the provinces?"

In the end she yielded to their persuasions. She was so young—only twenty-six—and life still lay before her. She was rich, too, and for the first time free—decidedly Paris was not without its attractions. At this moment a charming house in the Rue du Faubourg-

Saint-Honoré belonging to the financier Bouret happened to be for sale.

Madame de Sabran went to see it and bought it immediately. It was here that she was living peacefully with her children, surrounded by her friends when an invitation to supper at the Maréchale de Luxembourg's brought about the event that changed the current of two lives for ever, and on this memorable evening Stanislas de Boufflers and Eléonore de Sabran met for the first time face to face

CHAPTER II

"A GARDEN ENCLOSED"

THE Chevalier de Boufflers lost no time in paying his court to the lovely widow; the very day after their meeting at the Hôtel de Luxembourg, he presented himself, with his friend, the Prince de Ligne, at her house in the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré.

The Rue Saint-Honoré and its continuation the Faubourg was at this date the most varied street in Paris; here lived many of the most fashionable *marchands de frivolités*, the most brilliant courtesans, and here, too, were some of the great convents and the houses of the old nobles. But the Faubourg was essentially the aristocratic end of the street, and still to-day, on its south side, several of the magnificent historical houses, with their huge *portes cochères* remain—the Hôtel de Guébrian, the Hôtel de Charost (now the British Embassy), and the Hôtel d'Aguesseau. Between these and the Hôtel d'Evreux (now the Palais Elysée), where either the number 43 or 45 now stands, was the house of Madame de Sabran. It must have been a perfectly delicious retreat amidst the whirl of Paris life, shut off by its massive entrance from the noise of the street, whilst on the other side were the rooms in which she lived, with their windows looking south over a sea of green, beyond which, on the left, were the Place Louis XV (now the Place de la Concorde), and the great gates of the Tuileries. A sunny terrace ran along this side of the house, from which steps led down into the enormous garden, where smooth green lawns

shaded by splendid old trees stretched right away to the Champs Elysées. To-day, as one walks along the green alley known now as the Avenue Gabriel, bordered by the tall iron railings of these old gardens, one catches for a moment a glimpse of the stately world of eighteenth-century Paris. Beneath some of these very trees the women of the reign of Louis XVI walked perhaps in their flowing muslin gowns on summer mornings; through that great gateway Madame de Sabran may often have passed with Delphine and Elzéar into the Champs Elysées. Her house is gone, but those remaining close by give one an idea of its appearance, and in looking out of the south windows of the British Embassy one sees—but for such modern disfigurements as the Eiffel Tower—much the same prospect as she saw from the windows of her salon a hundred and thirty years ago.

Inside the house was charming, for Bouret had decorated it at enormous cost, yet with far from plutocratic floridness of taste, and the exquisite mouldings, carvings, and panellings of that enchanting period formed a perfect background to the furniture and "bibelots" that Madame de Sabran had collected.

Of all these things, however, the Chevalier de Boufflers probably saw little at this first visit; he had eyes, not for the shrine, but only for the divinity it held. The sudden thrill of emotion he had felt the evening before at the supper-party was intensified a hundredfold now that he saw her in her own surroundings, dressed with the subtle simplicity of which she made an art. She never wore anything that glittered, says one of her contemporaries, but "with infinite skill, made use of the simplest ornaments. She appeared to have arranged nothing and to have left everything to chance; but, when one looked at her closely, one saw that nothing had been forgotten." [1]

The Chevalier de Boufflers, gazing at her fascinated,

[1] "Galerie des Dames Francaises."

realized that here at last was the reality, the naturalness he had often sought in vain ; here, too, was a purity and goodness for which, cynical man of the world that he was, he still retained a lingering reverence. Long years afterwards he wrote a story called " Ah ! si. . . ." in which the picture of the " Comtesse de Blum " is evidently a description of his feelings at his first meeting with Madame de Sabran, for the details he gives exactly coincide with those given by Madame Vigée le Brun and other of her contemporaries :

" Imagine . . . not the most striking thing you have ever seen, but, what is a great deal more, the most fascinating : a soul visible rather than mere beauty, that is what struck me at the first glance. . . ."

But after that first electrical moment he began to realize her outward beauty, which he describes in detail :

" That beautiful hair, of which the silvery fairness contrasts so charmingly with the colour of the eyebrows and lashes, that delicate complexion, with its candid whiteness, those blooming cheeks that seem tinged by innocence ; . . . those eyes, the colour of pansies that shed more light than they receive ; and that nose that, by its shape, its fineness, could belong to no one else and seems like the point of meeting of all the other charms of the whole face ; even that chin, at which one cannot help looking ; . . . that *tout ensemble* at the same time noble and arcadian [*champêtre*] elegant and simple, quiet and animated, that makes up her appearance ; that almost aerial body in which Nature has only made use of matter to show forth grace and to incorporate a spirit. . . ." [1]

[1] Madame Vigée le Brun, who describes Madame de Sabran in her memoirs as *fort jolie*, has evidently not flattered her in the portrait reproduced in this book, but she has shown us the woman as she knew her with the look of teasing tenderness, the enigmatic smile, the rebellious hair, the wit, the whimsicality, the careless attitude so natural to her. This picture is now in Liège. M. Pierre de Croze, on p. 116 of " Le Chevalier de Boufflers et Madame de Sabran," says he has seen six portraits of her in all of which she has blue eyes, fair hair, and nearly black eyebrows and

L. E. Vigée le Brun pinxit

F. Bajon sculpsit

La Comtesse de Sabran

Emery Walker ph sc

When Eléonore began to talk her conversation acted like a spell on the minds of her two listeners. There were many clever women in Paris at this date—women who talked of " government, law, public order," like the Chevalier's cousin, the pedantic Comtesse de Boufflers; amusing women, like his mother, the marquise; witty women, like old Madame du Deffand; but none of these had Madame de Sabran's extraordinary picturesqueness of conversation—a " magic lantern of ideas," as Madame Vigée le Brun described it. The Prince de Ligne, in one of the best descriptions of the art of conversation ever written, has recorded the impression that she made on him :

" It is above all in conversation that her quickness of mind shows in all its charm. Eléonore knows so well how to pass from one subject to another! She seems to lead you through an English garden, where one never goes along the same path twice, and where one always sees fresh objects of interest. Her simple and lively imagination shows them to one as in a moving picture; one sees them, they live, they walk about. She conveys her impressions as vividly as she receives them, for to relate well one must be able to feel keenly. . . . She never knows what she ought to say, and one lets oneself be carried away by the unpremeditated charm of her gentle talk [*sa douce causerie*] as if in a light skiff along the course of a beautiful river. One no more knows where one is going to than she knows where she is taking one. She interrupts herself, she goes wrong, she corrects herself. Her want of memory adds to the originality of her discourse; she never repeats herself, just as a bird never sings the same song over again. The right and the piquant expression always comes to her lips. She writes, and her pen even in verse

lashes), and amongst these is one in which she is dressed as a widow: " her face appears quite small; one sees nothing but her big blue eyes. . . . A white cap bordered with black imprisons her fair hair, which was usually out of control, with curls forming an aureole round her head. . . . In her other portraits (as in this of Madame le Brun's) her disordered hair makes her head appear out of proportion." I have been unable to find this portrait as a widow.

seems to fly all by itself. The greatest charm of Eléonore is above all things naturalness; at Court they call her 'Fleur des Champs.' Coquetry has always been as foreign to her as intrigue! yet she charms—charms every one without intention, without design, and without malice, and a great deal more and a great deal better than if she thought about it."

Whether she intended it or not, she certainly succeeded in charming the Chevalier; but I am not sure that "coquetry" was as foreign to her nature as the Prince de Ligne supposed, and she probably found it exceedingly amusing to have the gay Chevalier at her feet. She was not the least in love with him, and thought him far from handsome, for her letters to him later are full of laughing allusions to his appearance, to his ungainly way of walking, his small and piercing eyes, his gruff and absent-minded manner. Still, she found him interesting; he appealed to her ever lurking sense of humour, he was a "character," not like anybody else, and would certainly be a piquant addition to her "salon."

At first the friendship proceeded on the usual stately lines of the period, as this little note will show. The Chevalier had evidently proposed to his great-aunt, the Maréchale de Luxembourg, to invite them both at the same time to Montmorency, her beautiful château just outside Paris; but, at the last moment, fears for Madame de Sabran's fragile constitution overcome him:

"I should like to have good news of your health, Madame la Comtesse, and to take to Montmorency the hope of seeing you there. It is very magnanimous of me to point out to you that the weather is very wild, and that perhaps it is not prudent for you to keep your promise. . . . If I had all the talents that every day I envy Madame la Comtesse I should portray myself at her feet."

The talent referred to was painting, for Boufflers soon discovered Madame de Sabran's skill as an artist,

and art of course provided an excellent excuse for prolonged conversations and frequent calls. With all a lover's ingenuity he cast about for ways of seeing her oftener; he manœuvred for invitations to the same houses, and at each meeting he fell more and more under the spell of her fascination.

One day he discovered that she had studied Latin; she had, in fact, been taught by the eminent Abbé Delille and could construe Virgil and Horace fluently. Boufflers was quick to seize his opportunity; he himself was an excellent Latin scholar—would Madame la Comtesse allow him to continue the abbé's course of instruction? Madame la Comtesse would be charmed! Henceforth many pleasant hours were spent under the trees of her garden reading the Latin poets.

Music took them a step further along the path of intimacy. Eléonore, in her little silver thread of a voice, would sing to him on the guitar and he would answer on the harpsichord, with some *ronde* of his own composing:

"Être jolie, être belle,
Ce n'est rien que tout cela,
Il faut être comme celle,
Comme celle que voilà!

"L'œuillet, la rose nouvelle,
Ce n'est rien que tout cela,
Pour en parler près de celle,
Près de celle que voilà!

"L'honneur, la gloire immortelle,
Ce n'est rien que tout cela;
Il vaut mieux vivre avec celle,
Avec celle que voilà.

"Un cœur tendre, un cœur fidèle,
Ce n'est rien que tout cela,
Si je ne puis plaire à celle,
Plaire à celle que voilà."

After a while he took to coming in the mornings when she was alone at work on a picture. It was then that she most amused the Chevalier, for she had all the moods

of her artistic temperament. A splendid inspiration would come to her, which she hastened feverishly to carry out on canvas ; but the idea would not materialize. She grew impatient, discouraged, desperate ; meanwhile her pretty fingers became smudged with paint and her golden hair grew more and more disordered, thereby provoking gentle mirth on the part of the Chevalier. Yet it was at these moments that he thought her most adorable. He loved her vagueness, he loved even the inconvenience resulting from it in the pretty rooms so like herself, where one could never find the thing one wanted. Books wandered out of the book-cases and piled themselves on chairs ; ink-stands remained empty, pens uncut—everything was careless, charming, and unlike the houses of other women. It was an atmosphere that exactly suited the casual Chevalier. He liked to wander in on summer days and look for her in the great shady garden ; coming out of the drawing-room windows on to the terrace, he would catch a glimpse through the trees of a fairy thing in billowing white muslin moving lightly along the garden path, her small feet in their satin slippers hardly seeming to touch the ground. Then she would awake as from a dream and come towards him with a smile on her little plaintive face and in those blue eyes with their black lashes that were like no eyes he had ever seen before. Together they would walk over the smooth lawns with the blazing flower-beds to the summer-house overlooking the green alleys of the Champs Elysées, where books and work and paintings were heaped in charming confusion. Here on the grass beneath the trees Delphine and Elzéar were often playing, and they would rush to welcome their mother's curious new friend, the kind, odd-looking man who held them on his knee and told them fairy stories. The Chevalier not only loved the children, but he understood them, and before long Madame de Sabran fell into the habit of consulting him about them. He was always full of wise and kind advice on these occasions—never

gruff or absent-minded as he was wont to be with other people.

Madame de Sabran was so alone in the world that she found the Chevalier a rock to lean on. Yet still she did not dream of loving him. Had she not heard, like every one else, of his scandalous reputation? Was not he the author of "Aline, Reine de Golconde" and the *coqueluche* of half the women of Paris? Yet, though she knew these things, she was not in the least alarmed by them. Boufflers might be a rake, but he was a rake whose fundamental quality was "boundless goodness of heart"; he might be the hero of many amorous adventures, but he was no vain or cold-hearted *séducteur* like Lauzun or Tilly; he might be a scoffer, but he scoffed because he hated hypocrisy, because he longed for reality that he looked for in vain in the world around him.

All this Eléonore de Sabran, with her curious faculty of clairvoyance, saw in Boufflers, and with the daring of innocence she embarked gaily on this great friendship —a friendship she never dreamt would turn to love. Why should she fall in love—she who had kept her head so well amidst the seductions of the Court? She was quite sure that she would be able to keep it now!

"Good women," said the Prince de Ligne—perhaps as he watched the beginning of this romance—"run the greatest risks—they are the least prepared for what may happen."

One day a great idea came to Madame de Sabran—she would paint the Chevalier's portrait! Boufflers meekly resigned himself to the ordeal, but the sittings proved fatal to the sang-froid of the model, for one morning, when Madame de Sabran went to her easel, she found these verses pinned upon it:

"D'un procédé sûr et nouveau
Vous vous servez, ma jeune Apelle;
Pour animer votre tableau
Vous enflammez votre modèle.

" Vous mêlez cent tons différents
Du plus sombre jusqu'au plus tendre ;
Pour vous peindre ce que je sens
Quel est celui que je dois prendre ?

" Sur mon secret votre talent
Vous instruira bientôt lui-même
Quand mon portrait sera parlant
Il vous dira que je vous aime ! "

Madame de Sabran received this declaration with a smile. He loved her—but what did love mean to him, this man who had made love lightly to so many other women ; what did he know of love as she understood it, she, " Fleur des Champs," who had never wasted herself in *bergeries* ? So with the caution of a true woman of the world she took his declaration at what she believed that it was worth, and would not even allow herself to think of loving him. Of course he was not to be taken seriously ! When he looked with passion into the depths of her blue eyes she answered him with light mockery.

" There must be no talk of love between us ! " she said. " I want you as a friend—a friend only."

" Say as a brother ! " pleaded the Chevalier.

" Well, then, as a brother. But there must not be a word that is not strictly brotherly."

And the Chevalier, accustomed to easy conquest, was so piqued that he fell more in love with her than ever.

. . . . .

All through that autumn of 1777 Madame de Sabran heard with sadness the talk of war with England, for the salons of Paris had unanimously accorded America their sympathy in the struggle for independence. The new ideas on liberty, which had seemed hitherto embodied in the English constitution, now found further expression in the democratic ideals of the American insurgents, and the declaration of the rights of man, modelled on the style of Jean Jacques Rousseau, was hailed with delight by the " Encyclopédistes " of France.

America was not slow to recognize the advantage of enlisting the sympathies of one of the great Powers of Europe, and envoys were sent over to France to further the cause of American independence amongst the leaders of the salons. This "supper-table diplomacy," as it might be described, was entirely successful. Benjamin Franklin, whose homely appearance with the fur cap and spectacles from which he refused to be parted, inspired confidence in these votaries of the return to nature, and was welcomed enthusiastically everywhere. Men hung upon the words of wisdom that fell from his lips, women frankly embraced him on both cheeks.

France went mad over the wrongs of America; forgetting her own unpreparedness for war, forgetting the depleted state of her exchequer, she flung herself into the struggle with a blind enthusiasm of which later on she reaped the tragic consequences. In that moment of impulsive folly she sent forth the flower of her aristocracy to join the American insurgents, and emptied her treasury of 1,200,000,000 francs, thereby increasing the famous "deficit" the first factor in the Revolution. Sixteen years later the unhappy queen, nicknamed by the Paris mob "Madame Déficit," was to suffer for the situation created by the action of these misguided champions of liberty—an action that had been resolutely opposed by the king who, with unusual insight, foresaw the grave consequences of provoking war with England. "When the struggle was ended the American Republic was founded, but the French Monarchy was lost." [1]

By the middle of the winter the treaty with America was signed, and war began; immediately the offices of ministers and the king's apartments at Versailles were mobbed by courtiers begging for staff appointments in the armies which were to be sent to the north of France with the object of attacking England.

The Chevalier de Boufflers was, of course, one of the first to apply for a command, but at first his chances

[1] "Les beaux jours de Marie Antoinette," by Imbert de Saint-Amand.

seemed small, for he was still in disfavour at the Court—what else could he expect if he *would* write disrespectful verses about royal personages? Only a short time before, the king, on being asked to sign a list for promotion in the army, noticed the name of the luckless Chevalier and crossed it out boldly, remarking: "I do not like verses or epigrams!" On this occasion, however, Boufflers was more fortunate, and the day came when he was able to announce proudly to Madame de Sabran that he had been made second in command to General de Castries in the army which was to be sent to Paramé in Brittany. Soon, all too soon, he must say farewell to his "sister" in the Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré! But at the thought of the glory that might await him on this campaign the fighting blood in his veins tingled. He longed to go and fight! Yet he adored Madame de Sabran! All through the vicissitudes of his life we find him torn between these ruling passions of his nature—love and adventure. He could not be satisfied with the tame things of life, he longed for an outlet for his restless activities, his overflowing vitality, and so, when he was with the woman he loved he could still hear the voices of the wide world calling him, yet when he answered them and left her the thought of her was always with him, and he longed to throw up everything and fly back to her again.

Madame de Sabran acted, however, as a fresh incentive to valour. More than ever now he longed to distinguish himself. For his devotion to Madame de Sabran had placed him in an unforeseen predicament. Fifteen years before, when he had lightly taken the vow of celibacy on becoming a knight of Malta, he had never dreamt that he would live to regret it. *Bergeries* were all he thought of in those days, and marriage seemed to him a prospect he could very cheerfully forego. Now for the first time in his life he had met a woman with whom he could not play at *bergeries*; moreover, nothing less than marriage would satisfy him. But he

had taken a vow of celibacy! What was to be done? It was, of course, always possible to be released from one's vows by leaving the order of the Knights of Malta, but that meant also relinquishing the revenues he drew from the Order. Deprived of these he would be a poor man—far too poor to ask a rich and beautiful widow to be his wife.

But if only he could do something brilliant! Return from this war covered with glory and loaded with the emoluments that were at this period the inevitable reward of valour—then his heart's desire might be granted him! And so, with high hopes, the Chevalier de Boufflers set forth on the campaign against "the eternal rival"—England.

CHAPTER III

" THE ETERNAL RIVAL "

THE strangest fact about this desultory campaign was the entire absence of animosity towards the enemy. Our adversaries of 1778 gave way to no ebullitions of fury or " hymns of hate." They meant to fight us in the cause of liberty ; they hoped to invade us and show proud Albion that she could not protect herself for ever behind her rampart of the sea ; but, had they ever succeeded in setting foot upon our shores the invasion would certainly have been of a very different description to the one promised us by Germany to-day. The sons and grandsons of the men who, at Fontenoy, took off their hats to our troops, remarking : " Messieurs, it is for you to fire the first shot ! " had retained all their old courtliness in time of war.

But the French, above all other soldiers, need a certain virulence to succeed in the field of battle, and in the campaign of 1778 this virulence was lacking. In the Memoirs of the Comte de Ségur, the friend of the Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran, who was appointed to the staff in the same army as Boufflers, we find a description of this attempted invasion of England, but neither here nor in the letters of the Chevalier do we read a word of rancour against the English.

Before taking leave of his " sister " in Paris, Boufflers had suggested that they should write to each other—would it not be an excellent plan for Madame de Sabran to continue her Latin by correspondence ? Madame de Sabran agreed that the educational advantages the

scheme offered would be untold, but she was careful to give the Chevalier strict injunctions never to allow a word that was not purely " fraternal " to find its way into his letters. This command Boufflers made heroic efforts to obey, and fortunately the flowery language of the period afforded him a latitude impossible in modern letter-writing, and it was by no means beyond the limits of fraternal affection for the Chevalier to send his " sister " embraces in his letters or to write " Je vous aime."

His letters from Brittany are charming, but only a few extracts can be given here. The first was written just after his arrival in about December 1777.

" I do not want to talk to my sister of my grief at having seen so little of her on Sunday, and at not having seen her at all on Monday. My sister is to me like royalty, to whom one must only show a contented face. Happily she cannot see mine when I am a hundred and fifty leagues away from her ! . . . Heavens, dear sister, when shall I see you again ? I am like a miser parted from his treasure ; it is true he could not enjoy it, but he could spend the day looking at it. . . . Write to me a little, dear and charming sister ; I live only on my memory of you. Have not preachers and metaphysicians told you that if God forgot the world for a moment it would fall into space ? You are that God, and I am the world ; do not forget me !

" The day of the Nativity of our Saviour.

" I have just come back from Saint-Malo, which I had never seen before. It is the most curious town in France both physically and morally. It is a democracy in a monarchy, situated sometimes on land, sometimes in the sea. . . . Fortresses disgust one with war ; I cannot think without shuddering that, for the quarrels of kings who never think about them, and of nations that do not know of them, thousands of men, chosen for their valour and their honour, pine for years together in the most horrible prisons. To die is nothing, to

fight is pleasant enough, but to be bored is frightful. (Mourir n'est rien, se battre est assez joli, mais s'ennuyer est affreux.)

" I enjoyed myself very much at Rennes amidst the tumult of the States. I was glad to distinguish the voice of liberty and of its first-born, patriotism. I was born for other times, other countries, other laws. I think that in Athens, or even in Sparta, I might have been worth something. In order to be a citizen I want nothing but a country—like those poor devils of foundlings who would be the best relations in the world if they only had a family.

" In that respect I am well provided for, as I have a sister whom I would not exchange for a whole family. Farewell, sister, accustom yourself to being loved, for I will not leave off in order to oblige you ! "

Sometimes a rather more than brotherly tone found its way into the Chevalier's letters—nor, evidently, was it always met with a rebuff. " *Mon Dieu*, how I love you, my dear sister ! " he breaks out incontrollably ; " get accustomed to it if you can, for I shall never be cured of the habit. Eat Delphine and Elzéar for me —only I can ever teach them to love and respect you for I think neither of them make enough of you. Tell Madame, and *not* Monsieur d'Andlau, to kiss you for me."

Unfortunately, few of Madame de Sabran's answers to the Chevalier's letters from Brittany have been preserved, and it is evident, from Boufflers' continual reproaches on the subject, that she was at this date a very bad correspondent—probably more through vagueness than indifference, for she admits that she seldom knew the date and no doubt imagined that she wrote oftener than she did. Whatever the cause, she succeeded in perpetually exasperating the Chevalier :

" I am only writing you a word in the bitterness of my heart ; here are six letters with no reply. You know something of my feelings, and if you ever think of me you can imagine my anxiety."

Or again :

" What have I done to you, my sister, that you should abandon me so cruelly ? Here is more than a fortnight without a word from your hand, and you know that it alone feeds me in this vale of tears. It is all very well to tell me that I do not bore you—I begin to believe it."

When, to one of these *cris de cœur* Madame de Sabran airily replied that she wrote quite three letters to every one of his, the Chevalier flatly contradicted her :

" You fib like a coquette when you say you write three letters to one of mine. I have counted better than you. . . ."

But if by chance the Chevalier failed to write with his usual regularity it was then the turn of Madame de Sabran to be bitterly indignant, and she would write overwhelming him with reproaches.

The perpetual quarrels that recur all through this strange correspondence certainly save it from monotony—never did the course of love or of platonic friendship run less smooth.

" We must admit," wrote Madame de Sabran when Boufflers had displayed one of his not unusual fits of temper, " we must admit, my brother, that our correspondence is very pleasant. We take it in turn to reproach each other, and we quarrel all the time. Your letters, too, are intermittent. Sometimes I receive two at once and then I am centuries without hearing from you—no wonder I end by being annoyed. I scold you or I do not write to you, and you complain of me ; or else I am ill and you still complain—complain all the time without rhyme or reason, and without having the least cause of complaint. Your last letter is a chapter of bad temper. . . ."

The situation in Brittany at this moment certainly did not tend to improve Boufflers' temper for as the

weeks went by his hopes of glory showed no promise of fulfilment. Indecision on the part of ministers—notably of Maurepas—and dilatoriness on the part of the military leaders before long damped the enthusiasm of the waiting troops.

"Nothing," Boufflers writes dejectedly, "could be worse than the prelude to war which we are making. My regiment would suffer less in a campaign; it is tired out, cut up, ruined, infected with scurvy and itch—nothing is wanting now but the plague, which I am expecting. . . . War itself would be less trying than all this, for it would offer at least some compensation. But I am much afraid that we shall not go to England, and England will not come here. We shall spend years waiting for what will never happen, seeming to fear war instead of preparing for it. Instead of the fever we shall have the shivers—which is not at all heroic. The sorry colonels of Brittany flatter themselves that they will come back in June, but I believe nothing of that. My imagination is hung with black. . . . Sometimes, by way of distraction, I imagine myself at the fraternal house. I see from here—books, pictures, pens, paints, green trees, a summer-house, wide garden paths; I perceive between the trees a sort of little nymph walking with a book in her hand, and I run to meet her. How fortunate she should be my sister! How unfortunate she should be *only* my sister! Farewell, dear sister, forgive me for a sadness in which you play too great a part. Before I knew you I often felt boredom, but never regret. Why did I meet you so late? Why must I see you so seldom? Why is absence so long and life so short?"

Madame de Sabran, waiting in vain for news of stirring events, at last could not refrain from lightly taunting Boufflers about the war that never came off. To which he replied ironically:

"You make merry over our war in Brittany—it is evident you are not here. Do you not know that there is nothing wanting to us but enemies? For, on the

other hand, we have a general, a sergeant-major, a staff, an ammunition column and commissariat, and we are called *the army of Brittany*. I must beg you henceforth to speak with the respect due to an army, otherwise I shall suggest punishing you by quartering some one from my regiment in your house.

" Would you really be kind enough to send me a box of French pastels, and with them some small prepared canvases with exact instructions how to use them? This is a commission I am giving you and not a present that I ask of you—I want nothing to remind me that you are richer than I am.

" Kiss your lovely children on my behalf even more tenderly than on your own. Leave it to me to spoil them whilst you undertake their bringing up. You would not believe how much I regret not seeing Delphine dance. Farewell, my sister; I can never express what I feel within me when writing this word of 'sister.' Farewell; remember the need I have of your friendship; it charms without satisfying me, it holds for me all the worth that drought and thirst lend to a drop of water."

Whilst Boufflers was writing these lines Paris was in the midst of a great excitement. Voltaire had arrived! Voltaire, aged eighty-four, with hardly a breath of life left in his frail body, had driven all the way from Switzerland with a brazier burning in his travelling carriage, to receive the last ovations of the Parisians at the performance of his play *Irène*.

Boufflers, who had never forgotten his old friend at Ferney, wrote begging Madame de Sabran to go and visit the philosopher, and she evidently went; but no letter can be found recording her impressions.

" I hope you have seen Voltaire," wrote Boufflers. " I am afraid he will stay too long—Paris is too young for him. Once its first curiosity is over, it will leave him alone. . . . If you have the opportunity to see him often, be quite at your ease with him and you will delight him. If I were there I could explain to him the difference there is between you and a pretty woman

—that is less apprehended by the eye than by the mind."

But Voltaire's triumph had been too much for him, and he was dying when Boufflers wrote again :

" I fear very much for poor Voltaire. You do not tell me that he confessed, but I know it through Monsieur de Beauvau. I trust that his soul may go to Paradise, but I wish his mind could stay on earth—two things that would be very difficult. If he is well enough, try to see him again—he will end by loving you madly."

Voltaire died on May 30—from an excess of glory, Madame du Deffand drily remarked. The Marquise de Boufflers showed more feeling than the cynical old woman whom for thirty years Voltaire had regarded as his friend. " La mère Oiseau " might be *volage* in her tastes, but she was certainly constant in her affections, and the refusal of the curé of Saint-Sulpice to accord the dead philosopher decent burial filled her with indignation. Paris was flooded with pamphlets and satires on this action of the Church : " Amongst all these," says the Comte de Ségur, " the one that struck me most was the piece composed by the Marquise de Boufflers, mother of the Chevalier de Boufflers, the Chaulieu and the Anacreon of our day :

" Dieu fait bien ce qu'il fait : la Fontaine l'a dit ;
Si j'étais cependant l'auteur d'un si grand œuvre,
Voltaire eût conservé ses sens et son esprit ;
Je me serais gardé de briser mon chef d'œuvre.

" Celui qui dans Athène eût adoré la Grèce,
Que dans Rome à sa table Auguste eût fait asseoir,
Nos Césars d'aujourd'hui n'ont pas voulu le voir
Et Monsieur de Beaumont lui refuse une messe.

" Oui, vous avez raison, Monsieur de Saint-Sulpice
Eh ! pourquoi l'enterrer ? N'est-il pas immortel ?
A ce divin génie on peut, sans injustice,
Refuser un tombeau, mais non pas un autel." [1]

[1] The allusion to " Césars " refers to the Emperor Joseph II.

The Chevalier de Boufflers comments on this incident in his next letter to Madame de Sabran, after criticizing her Latin verses :

" We are making verses, and Voltaire is dead. I mourn him deeply, for I loved him more than I ever said . . . the feelings of a son with which he inspired me at Ferney had never died out, and the news of his death and what followed after seems to have revived it. It is not worth while to have recourse to philosophy in order to judge the persecutors of his corpse ; theology alone condemns them. . . . God can read the stirring of repentance in the heart of the dying, He can see what men cannot understand, and we must never believe in the damnation of any one. It is not religion that has closed the doors of the Church on the remains of this great man."

Other important events were agitating Paris this spring of 1778. For the first time since the marriage of the king and queen there was a hope of a dauphin. The whole nation rejoiced, and no one more than Madame de Sabran, for she knew the queen and understood all that this would mean to her. With Marie Antoinette the love of children was a passion—a passion hitherto thwarted, that had vented itself in a restless striving for excitement.

Never had the queen appeared so gay as this winter. Over the snow of the boulevards her sleigh had passed like a flash, drawn by its two white horses in their blue and silver harness with gaily jingling bells, and passers-by had caught a glimpse of a fresh young face glowing amongst swathing folds of ermine. At the opera balls she had been recognized beneath a too thin disguise as she moved amongst the crowd with all the innocent adventurousness of her twenty-two years. It was such a relief, thought Marie Antoinette, to leave off for a few hours being a queen and amuse herself like the rest of the world ! She was often so tired of Versailles and its endless ceremonial.

"People think it is very easy to play the queen—they are wrong. The constraints are endless, it seems that to be natural is a crime. . . . I am very wearied of all this bondage." So she had written to her sister a year ago, and so she felt when she sought a vent for her spirits in the masked balls at the Opera. But the Emperor, her brother, had shown her the error of her ways, and she had promised to give up the balls, and the sleigh-drives too, which for some unaccountable reason so irritated the Parisians. She went further, and made a vow to God, a vow that on the day He granted her the joy of being a mother she would cease from vanity and become truly serious. Now at last that day was in sight! The great desire of her heart was to be given her.

Madame de Sabran, hearing the good news, hastened to Versailles with her congratulations, and in a characteristic letter written on her return from a visit to her confessor she describes the occasion to the Chevalier:

"*The 25th of April*, 1778.

"I must really have a talk with you to-day, my brother, to cheer and distract myself after a certain visit I have just made—and what a visit! A visit that one only makes at a certain time, to the knees of a certain man, to confess certain things that I will not tell to you. I am still quite weary and ashamed after it. I do not like that ceremony at all! We are told it is very salutary, and I submit to it as a well-conducted woman. You will hardly have faith in my almanacs when you know that my letters do not reach you six days late only because they are dated six days too early. You accused the post, and so did I; but I discovered, on examination, that I did not know the day of the month or of the week; my last letter showed me this—it was dated April 6 and it was written April 12. I only found after it had gone, to my great astonishment, that I was six days older than I thought, and I guessed that you would inveigh against the unfortunate post, which, after all, is innocent. To-day is

a day for amendments, my brother; give me your absolution so that I may have nothing more to wish for. I must tell you, in the way of news, that my stable is in mourning. I lost a poor Bucephalus last night —he died suddenly. I think it was partly my own fault, for I wanted to be one of the first to pay my compliments to the queen on her new condition. I started on Sunday at ten o'clock in frightful heat and I came back quickly at six. This hurried drive was good neither for my beast nor for me, and it will cost us both dear. The queen's condition still seems certain, and her health remains good. We are better employed thinking about a dauphin than about war, of which no one else talks at all now. On the contrary, the last two days there have been heavy bets on peace. Being a great politician, I see this with regret, for I am persuaded that if we do not fight the English now, at a moment so favourable to us, they will not fail to fight us when they find occasion. I assure you that if I had any voice in the council you would already be in London, the King of England in Paris, General (?) Howe routed, and peace declared to the great delight of the victorious French. There, my brother, is what I wish for you; and, meanwhile, to stay at Brest rather than to embark—for really the trouble would be greater than the pleasure or even than the glory. . . .

"Good-bye. Please try writing to me a little in Latin; there is no more question of it in your letters than if I did not understand it. I want, above all, a serious style, and if you like to make one think about you, you will achieve your purpose, for I do not know that language well, so I shall require long studies and many hours to read you! Yet your Latin is not that of Cicero! I am very frivolous to-day, my brother, and here is a great deal of nonsense when I ought to be in retreat and meditation, and occupied with other things than you. Good-bye, again. Never love me with any but brotherly love, and I will always have for you the affection of a sister. *Pax tecum et cum spiritu tuo.* . . .

"I expected your sword-knots to-day, but they have not arrived yet. . . ."

To this the Chevalier replied gaily :

" I have ruined you in sword-knots, my poor sister, for it is impossible for them to be fine without being expensive—yet they could never cost the price I set on them. If peace continues they will be my finest ornament ; if we make war they will become my talisman, and weapons adorned by your gifts will never be surrendered.

" What, charming little Magdalene ? You came out of the confessional, where you had said many things you could not tell to me—to *me*, when I would tell you so many things my confessor will never know ! Good God ! how piqued I feel at having counted for nothing in your mind ! And what did that man say who saw you at his knees ? Why was not *I* your confessor ! Why was not *I* your sin ! Why am not *I* your subject for repentance ! . . .

" If I were in Paris I would harness myself to your chariot to replace the deceased [Bucephalus]. I regret him deeply, for I have never had any reproach to bring against him, but that of going too fast when I was driving in your coach with you. . . . Henceforth you must have only old horses, and drive along like an old dowager, and never go out except to mass or to confession."

The Chevalier's letters amused Madame de Sabran immensely. She was enjoying herself very much in Paris—too much even to be sympathetic when the Chevalier, manlike, wrote to complain bitterly of a cold in the head. So does riotous health make—for the time being !—Christian Scientists of us all ! Boufflers himself, when feeling robust, was always inclined to disbelieve in the reality of suffering, and invariably attempted to brace Madame de Sabran on the subject of her ailments. But now it was Madame de Sabran's turn to be bracing :

" Do not speak to me of your sadness or of your sufferings, my brother ; all is for the best in the best of worlds—even your cold and your toothache ! If you

were never ill you would not appreciate health, and if you never left your friends you would never know the pleasure of seeing them again after long absence. Such is human life. . . . You will tell me that I may well talk like this since I have nothing left to wish for; it is true that I am happy, but I am quite sure our happiness is in ourselves, and that with reason and philosophy we are never unhappy in this world; at least, it is difficult to be so. I know of nothing but my poor little children who can stand in the way of my reason and philosophy; all my life is bound up with their health and happiness. . . ."

She goes on to describe a party at Prince Bariatinski's, where the faces of the gamblers round the pharaon and biribi tables made her shudder, and she takes the opportunity to lecture the Chevalier on his gambling habits:

"Never gamble, my brother, or you will really grieve me. Gambling is a horrible passion; it hardens the heart, it soils the soul, it is not worthy of you. Think, too, that you have given me your word of honour and that I should not forgive you for breaking it. . . . Goodbye, my brother; talk Latin to me, talk French to me, but above all talk reason to me!"

Perhaps it was this party that provoked in Madame de Sabran a mood of pessimism, for the next letter from the Chevalier is one of optimistic remonstrance against disparaging the period they lived in:

"You can never say so much ill of this century as you make me think well of it, dear sister. I cannot agree with you about spite and jealousy in general. I see that they are the faults of man and not of an age; I see that all centuries, contrary to all men, have always talked against themselves, and always made themselves out to be the worst. Yet they were not so at all, they were all equal in virtues and in vices. The only difference was in the lights of human nature that shone more or less brightly. . . .

"Let us not, then, think ourselves better or worse

than others. Everything comes and goes ; sometimes there are a few geniuses, sometimes a great many clever people, sometimes great wickedness, sometimes much petty malice. If I had to choose I would have an ordinary century like our own, in which war is milder than peace was formerly, in which there are no invasions of barbarians, no great battles, no single combats, in which society affords few examples of great affections but many very pleasant intimacies. I stop at this, my sister, for I am not of my century in the way of affection—do not you be of it either ! no, I like to persuade myself that I have never had more reason to believe in a part of what I hope for than in reading your last letter. . . . Good-bye, Eléonore; good-bye, Delphine ; good-bye, Elzéar. I kiss one of the three with all my heart, but I will not say which."

" An ordinary century like our own "—so wrote Boufflers eleven years before the Revolution, an age wherein such things as great wars and invasions of barbarians were relegated to the dim and distant past —so little do we realize the potentialities of the age we live in !

It is very unfortunate that a letter written by Madame de Sabran soon after this date is missing from the collection, for in it she told the Chevalier all about a week she had spent at the Court, where for once she had not been bored. But Madame de Sabran would indeed have been difficult to please if she had not enjoyed herself at Versailles this summer of which her contemporaries have told us so much. Times had changed since she had made her appearance there in the days of Louis XV, nine years earlier. The atmosphere of the Court was purified ; for the first time in a hundred years a monarch of irreproachable morals reigned over it, a young and innocent queen took the place that had hitherto been occupied by mistresses. Never had life at the Court of France been so simple and joyous ; even a " Fleur des Champs " could hardly find itself out of place there. They were all so young and

light-hearted, this little circle led by the queen of twenty-two ; the king was only twenty-five, his brothers and their wives younger still, their friends nearly all as young and as irresponsible as themselves.

But, unhappily, the spirit of intrigue was already at work, for the favour of the Polignacs was beginning. The Comtesse Jules—she was not yet the duchesse—has borne probably too large a share of the blame that attaches to the members of this family. A lovely, gentle creature—" of celestial beauty," say all her contemporaries—she appealed irresistibly to the warm-hearted Marie Antoinette, and her fatal indolence prevented her refusing the favours heaped upon her. Madame Vigée le Brun indignantly denies that the queen's friend was the " monster " she has been represented : " Ce monstre, je l'ai connue ; c'était la plus belle, la plus douce, la plus aimable femme qu'on put voir." [1] The real *intrigants* of the Polignac family were the Comte Jules and his unmarried sister, the Comtesse Diane, lady-in-waiting to Madame Elizabeth.

Few writers of memoirs have a good word to say of the Comtesse Diane.

" Ugly, spiteful, ambitious, and intriguing," says Madame d'Abrantès. " Madame de Créquy " goes further, and denies her any good qualities, adding that in appearance she was like a bird of prey.

Strange to say, this fierce lady was a great friend of Madame de Sabran's. Possibly the very gentleness of Eléonore disarmed her, for the Comtesse Diane always showed her great affection. Madame de Sabran had, as we should say, no axe to grind at the Court, and so, though jarred at moments by the Comtesse Diane's worldly-mindedness, she never came across the unpleasant side of her nature simply because she never got in her way. Moreover, the Comtesse Diane was a very clever and well-read woman, and it was she and Madame d'Andlau—the aunt of the Duchesse de

[1] " Mémoires de Madame Vigée le Brun," vol. ii. p. 318.

Polignac, and also a great friend of Madame de Sabran's —who constituted the only intellectual element at the Court. The other members of Marie Antoinette's circle were mostly butterflies—the Comte de Vaudreuil, Madame de Polignac's lover, who had made the terrible *gaffe* at the Maréchale de Luxembourg's supper-party ; the frivolous Baron de Besenval, " le beau Dillon," and the gay, delightful Prince de Ligne. Marie Antoinette, whose intellect, never her strong point, was at this stage of her life quite undeveloped, liked to surround herself with pleasant, unthinking people, whose conversation entailed no effort to the brain. Like many another amiable and kind-hearted woman, she was frankly bored by affairs of State ; she seldom opened a book, and if she wrote a letter her spelling and punctuation were invariably defective. Her tastes were of the essentially feminine order that at another period would have challenged no criticism—she liked pretty clothes, flowers, childish games, amusing gossip, " a little music " after supper. In the Comtesse Jules' apartment at the head of the great marble staircase she was perfectly happy. " With you," she said to the duchesse, " I am no longer the queen ; I am myself."

But this summer a deeper interest occupied her thoughts. Often she would find her way to the room where great preparations were going forward for the reception of the expected dauphin to touch with loving fingers the little garments of the finest batiste, inset with lace and ribbons, or to stand beside the tortoise-shell cradle where Henri IV had lain, hung with the holy charms that she had fastened there.[1]

It was here that Madame de Sabran could sympathize, for in their love of children these two women, otherwise so diverse in their tastes, could find a common ground. Marie Antoinette loved Delphine and Elzéar, and Madame de Sabran's references to her in her letters are almost always in connection with the queen's

[1] " Marie Antoinette," by F. de Vyré.

children or her own. And so this new mood of Marie Antoinette's found an answering echo in the heart of Eléonore de Sabran, and no doubt explains the fact that this year she enjoyed the Court as she had never done before.

Here in this dream-world of Versailles the summer days passed deliciously. Often the queen and her friends, the women in their pretty muslin gowns and shady hats bound with blue or lilac ribbons, would make their way to the Petit Trianon, where the new English garden with its clear streams and winding paths had replaced the formal lawns and flower-beds of Le Nôtre. There were the queen's roses to be admired—roses of every variety, that attracted the curious from miles away—and shrubs and plants of rare and lovely kinds. The Swiss village was not yet built, but the " Belvedere " and the exquisite " Temple de l'Amour " were nearly finished. The queen was never so happy as in this fairy world, and the Prince de Ligne, who was an impassioned gardener, entered into her schemes with all the enthusiasm he brought to bear on his own lovely Bel Œil.

This year, for the first time, the garden of the " Orangerie " was thrown open to the public, and beneath the windows of the queen the crowd walked up and down the illuminated terrace listening to the music played by the court musicians. The queen herself and all her party, drawn by the magic of the summer night, would wander in and out amongst the people, innocently entering into their enjoyment of the scene. But, alas! the tongue of slander and envy was already at work. " It was thus," the Prince de Ligne says of this summer, " that our charming and innocent nights on the terrace of Versailles that looked like an opera ball, were spoilt for us. We listened to conversation. . . . I gave my arm to the queen; her gaiety was charming. Sometimes we had music in the groves of the Orangerie, where high up in a niche is

the bust of Louis XIV. Monsieur le Comte d'Artois used to say to him: 'Bonjour, grandpapa.' One evening the queen and I planned that I should stand behind the statue and answer him, but the fear that they would give me no ladder to get down by and that I should be left there all night made me give up the idea. . . . At last some reasons and much malice stopped these pastimes, for it is apparently ordained that one must never amuse oneself at Court."

Madame de Sabran returned to Paris delighted with her visit and gaily wrote off to tell the Chevalier all about it. But the Chevalier was too deeply prejudiced against court life to sympathize with her enjoyment, and so he writes regretfully:

"You come from the Court where you have spent a week and you have not been bored! You are wearing yourself out, my sister, and the Court, after all the other injuries it has done me, will take my sister from me. You gambled, and I am sure you lost, since you do not tell me that you won. Let me scold you, my sister; you are not made for that world and its ways, you have neither health enough, nor money enough, nor patience enough, and you have too much nobility of mind, too much kindliness, too much wit. I know well that you do not go there for motives of interest; I know what favour awaits you there, and that gratitude compels you; but, my sister, it is not there that you will ever be happy, but in the midst of your children, your friends, your books, your paints, your gardens. The Court will draw you away imperceptibly from all this, and you will be wearied in the midst of pleasure without knowing why.

"Do not think that personal interest makes me speak. I hope I should not lose that friendship without which I could not live, but I see you placed on a level with what is beneath you. You, on your part, in order not to be lost, would have to leave the best part of yourself behind, just as, in order to escape drowning, one must leave one's gold on the water's edge. Once more, my sister, be yourself, and do not think me

prejudiced in my advice. I feel no rancour ; my reason and my friendship alone speak to you. It is not because I met with bad treatment in that world ; it is enough that you should be happy there for me to forgive it everything, but it is an atmosphere good neither for your health nor for your mind."

During this month of June there seemed at last some hope of activity for the army of Brittany. " War," Boufflers had written on May 27, " seems to be breaking out on all sides, but I still find it difficult to believe. It seems to me that no one is strong enough to undertake it, nor weak enough to be forced into it. If it takes place I think I shall be ordered to embark with the Duc de Chartres—would to God for an invasion, as otherwise there will be little glory for those of us on board ship. . . . You know what is to me the object of the war ; glory is not the coin with which I would be paid, but that wherewith I would buy the only good that seems to me worthy of desire. But, by the way, I am forgetting that it is to my sister I am writing, and that everything which is more than brotherly must be erased from my letters. . . ."

The invasion of England was, however, once more postponed, but at the end of June the waiting army was cheered by the news of a naval " victory." An English battleship, the *Arethusa*, had engaged a French frigate, the *Belle Poule*, commanded by Monsieur de la Clochetterie. The *Arethusa*, on this occasion, retired, far from " saucy," after a long and bloody fight, and the *Belle Poule*, badly damaged and depleted of half her crew, returned triumphantly to Brest. Madame de Sabran, hearing of this glorious combat, was filled with indignation at the Chevalier's omission to write and tell her about it :

" What, my brother, there is fighting ? a victory is almost gained ? at any rate, the English have been frightened, and you do not let me know ? I have to

hear it through the *Gazette*! You complain of me, but I should never have treated you so badly. I am so angry at your forgetfulness that I should certainly not write to you if I did not want still more to scold you. It is three weeks now since I heard of you, and this is the fourth letter to which you owe an answer. Write to me then, my brother, if only to tell me why you do not write. Good-bye; I am too angry to-day to talk to you; besides, I can think of nothing more to say to a constantly dumb being."

Boufflers always loved being scolded by Madame de Sabran, and replied in the best of tempers:

"*June* 24, 1778.

"I have nothing more urgent to say than how amiable you are, dear sister, and to thank you for having thought of me without being forced to by the importunity of my letters. Since my last, which you ought to have received before the 19th, I have been always on the move; sometimes on account of Monsieur le Duc de Chartres, whom I followed on different expeditions, sometimes on account of Monsieur de la Clochetterie, whose name by this time is certainly not unknown to you. . . .

"Let us talk of Monsieur de la Clochetterie. I saw him two or three times on board his ship, wounded, calm, busy with his work and his crew, surrounded by men who, when seeing him, thought no more of their wounds, or of their hardships, or of their exploits. . . .

"The wounded that I saw in the hospital, guarded by my regiment, did not complain, and all spoke only of the fighting. Yet one has lost a leg, another an arm, a third both arms; one had both thighs blown away. I saw all these wounds dressed, including ten of the worst cases, who were in the same room; it was a horrible sight, but the consolation is to see that in these brave men there is an inward balm that soothes all their sufferings—the thought of glory and self-contentment.

"You ought to be pleased with me, my sister, for I have not yet said a word about you; but do not suppose that I shall obey this law of silence to the end of my

letter—I love you too much for that. I am so proud, so happy at this evident sign of your friendship that I do not know what mine will become—it is a flame which needs no hard blowing on to burn down the whole house. . . .

" I am still thinking of your translation of Seneca, with which I am enchanted. Why have I not followed you from your cradle to this hour, dear sister! We should both have gained by it; you would have found out and cultivated all your talents earlier, and I, instead of committing so many follies, should have contented myself with one—the most reasonable of all, and the one of which I never shall be cured. My sister understands, of course, that it is poetry to which I refer."

The exploit of the *Belle Poule* greatly cheered the waiting troops, and it was now decided that the auspicious moment had come to bring off the great *coup* for which the campaign was the preparation. England must be invaded!

" Amidst all our drilling," wrote the Comte de Ségur from this camp, " our fêtes and our games—diversions that were powerless to calm our impatience—our minds were seriously occupied by one thought only, and by one desire: to see the moment arrive when we should embark and make a dash for the coast of England."

This great event was continually rehearsed by the intending invaders; embarkations, disembarkations, and sham fights took place daily, " shadows and images of war " that only whetted their impatience. When at last a fleet put out to sea the excitement was indescribable. But, alas, for the luckless Chevalier! the king's disfavour prevented him from being allowed to sail with the Duc de Chartres! He writes sadly to tell Madame de Sabran:

" *July 7, 1778.*

" I have only a moment to spare, my sister, and it is to my sister that I give it. I am going to Brest to see a naval army start, consisting of thirty-two battleships

and eight or ten frigates. Such a sight has not been seen since 1704,[1] and then it ended so badly that no one expected to see it again this century. I hope this fleet is starting under better auspices, and that it will prepare the way to England. Never has so much ardour, patriotism, and training been combined. I did all I could to follow my colonel on to the ocean, but his cousin opposed it. I am a great fool to care for glory, for she will have none of me."

Many gay ladies came from Paris for this great occasion, amongst them Boufflers' sister, Madame de Boisgelin, travelling for once with her husband. The Chevalier, in spite of his affection for his sister, was very much bored at having to show them round, and lead his lame brother-in-law, whom he did not like, from ship to ship and castle to castle. If people must come to Brest to see the fleet start, why not the one person he wanted to see? "Only you," he told Madame de Sabran sadly, "are not curious to see so great a spectacle!"

After the first few days no news came of the fleet—only vague rumours reached France, sometimes of defeat, sometimes of victory. Boufflers, waiting eagerly to join in the dash upon England, began to realize the magnitude of the undertaking:

"Imagine that for more than a fortnight we have had no news of the fleet! When she first started out we heard every day, but now we have sent frigate after frigate, without counting small vessels, but none have found the army. Meanwhile, every day I see the sick being taken to Brest who stop at Landerneau on their way to the hospital, which has just been started at Morlaix. All this gives one ideas, and sad ideas. We seem to be expecting great things, but we are playing for high stakes in a game at which one loses in losing, and loses still in winning. I liked what the wife of one of my friends said to me at Brest when first the fleet

[1] When the French fleet, under the Comte de Toulouse, set out from Brest to defend Gibraltar against the English, but arrived too late and was, eventually, badly damaged in the battle of Malaga.

set out: 'We who are sailors' wives, next to sorrow, what we dread most is happiness.' "

On July 27 the French fleet, under d'Orvilliers, encountered the English fleet of thirty ships under Admiral Keppel, and a battle ensued in which both sides were badly damaged, but no ships were taken. " England," says de Ségur, " too much accustomed to naval triumphs, considered herself beaten because we were not conquered, while France claimed the victory because she had not been repulsed."

The invasion of England had, however, to be put off for another year, and Boufflers was able to console himself with the prospect of returning to Paris to rejoin his long-lost " sister."

" *September* 28, 1778.

" I start in three days to find you, sister dearer than Antigone. I was waiting for news of you, and the fear of going where you would not be made me stay where I was. . . . All places differ according to your presence or your absence. You have on all the effect of leaves to the trees and flowers to the meadows. So, if I were my own master, I would go with you neither to Paris nor to Paradise. The most charming, my sister, would be to go with you to Hades, for I am sure the boredom of the resort would be nothing to the attractions of the journey. What will you do after the month of October ? Will you return early to Paris ? Try and arrange that I shall not wait for you long there. It is for you to lead and for me to follow ; you are my light, and I your shadow."

Madame de Sabran proved maddeningly elusive ; her children had returned home, but she was enjoying herself with friends in the country and left the Chevalier waiting for her so long in Paris that he was obliged at last to write threatening to fall into bad habits if she did not return to keep him straight :

" Your absence is long and dreary, dear and lovely sister, and I have had time to commit little follies at

Madame de Montesson's from which I should have been prevented by your presence or by the pleasure of supper at your house. But what I lost most there was honour, for I had given you my promise not to gamble. But honour is only a word, and money is a pleasant thing in the century in which we are living. Yesterday we saw Delphine. I was with Madame de Mirepoix and my sister Lucile in the Champs-Elysées. As we passed your garden railing, Lucile saw Delphine coming out of the salon, and then you should have seen one call and the other run! There was never anything so sweet as Delphine's joy and sort of emotion at seeing me . . . she was as brilliant as a little narcissus. Her skin, her colouring, her lips, her hair were all at their best. I was proud for you, for I know where your pride lies.

"Farewell, my sister, come back; I need you as one needs the breeze in summer and the sun in winter. Farewell again; I kiss you as a good father, as a good brother, and as a doubtful friend."

This letter had the desired effect, and Madame de Sabran returned to Paris.

CHAPTER IV

PLAYING WITH FIRE

THE winter passed delightfully for the Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran. They were still at that enthralling stage of a love affair when neither knew precisely the feelings of the other and neither had any idea how it was going to end. Madame de Sabran realized, of course, that the Chevalier was desperately in love with her, but then he was famous for his amorous adventures—how long would this passion last? The Chevalier, on the other hand, had no reason to believe Madame de Sabran loved him; her friendliness disarmed him completely, her simplicity baffled him. He might come every day to her house, always certain to be received with a smile; he might ride with her in the Bois de Boulogne, read with her, paint with her, sing or rhyme with her to his heart's content, but never must a word of love pass his lips! Still that stern decree held, and only by attempting to obey it could he hope to retain his place in her favour. Were there never lapses? Never moments when a look or word of his told her that his feelings for her were more than brotherly? It is quite probable. And it is also probable that Madame de Sabran, being very much a woman, forgave him. He had seldom, however, the good fortune to find himself alone with her, for her salon had now become the rendezvous for all the most interesting people in the literary and artistic worlds of Paris. It was an entirely different set to the one he had frequented with his mother; here were none of the diversions

that attracted the frivolous "Birds," no faro or biribi tables; but the great pastime in which the period excelled—conversation. "Comme on causait, comme on pensait, comme on écrivait, dans ce temps-là!" said the Duchesse d'Abrantès, looking back on those days. "Que d'esprit, de raison même au milieu d'une folie apparente qui ne présidait, au fait, qu'aux heures de dissipation."[1] Nowhere was better conversation heard than at Madame de Sabran's. The people she collected round her were of the kind who lived for art, not only in its technical sense, but in the way of *savoir vivre*, who never allowed their learning to appear pedantic or their profundity to become ponderous. Amongst the guests most often to be found here were the Comte de Ségur, a budding poet and a great friend of the Chevalier de Boufflers', the Duc de Coigny, Lord Dorset, the Comte de Vaudreuil, Madame Vigée le Brun, the painter,[2] the charming Marquise de Grollier, the Comtesse Auguste de la Marck, whose husband was the friend of Mirabeau, Madame de Saint-Julien, whom Voltaire called "the butterfly philosopher," witty Madame d'Andlau and Madame de Rochefort with her friend, the dear old Duc de Nivernais.

The Duc de Nivernais recurs so frequently in the history of the Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran and both at his salon in Paris and his house in the country they met so often, that no story of their lives would be complete without a description of this charming and interesting old man.

Louis Jules Mancini, Duc de Nivernais, born in 1716, nephew of Cardinal Mazarin, was the *beau idéal* of a *grand seigneur*. "The Duc de Nivernais," Lord Chesterfield wrote to his son, "is, in my opinion, one of the prettiest men I ever knew in my life. I do not

[1] "Les Salons de Paris," by the duchesse d'Abrantès, vol. i. p. 394.

[2] Madame Vigée le Brun speaks of Madame de Sabran as one of her four great friends, and of the Chevalier de Boufflers as a regular *habitué* of her *salon*; but she is unfortunately not mentioned in their correspondence.

know a better model for you to form yourself upon ; pray observe and frequent him as much as you can. He will show you what manners and graces are." In London, where he acted as ambassador, the duke made himself extremely popular ; he acted, painted, composed music and verses, played the violin exquisitely, and, though small and delicate, with a tendency all through his life to attacks of " vapours," he acquitted himself honourably as a colonel in several campaigns. But if his manners retained all the courtliness of a former age his opinions had advanced with the times, for he was a strong supporter of the movement in favour of greater equality between men of all classes. D'Alembert, Diderot, any social reformer who had anything to say for the good of humanity was free to ventilate his theories at the Hôtel de Nivernais and here every Thursday, in their wonderful *salon*, with its mirrors and Corinthian pillars, its ceiling of doves and cupids painted by Rameau, the duke and duchess received their guests.

The Duchesse de Nivernais, daughter of the Comte de Pontchartrain, had been married to the duke when he was only fourteen, and he had honestly tried his best to love her—indeed, for several years he had succeeded. " With a heart made for constancy in love," he wrote of himself, " change could not fill the void " ; and so, wearied by the objects of his fleeting fancies, it occurred to him, after eleven years of married life, to fall in love with his own wife. He set about it gallantly—in spite of the fact that she put on too much rouge to please his taste—and during five whole years he wrote her impassioned odes in which he addressed her as " Délie." Whether it was the rouge —" ce carmin, mon tourment éternel," of which he wrote plaintively—or other causes that checked his ardour, we are not told, but it is certain that from 1752 until her death, thirty years later, his friendship with Madame de Rochefort successfully filled the void in

his heart. It was a friendship typical of the period; promiscuous gallantries such as had enlivened the youth of the Maréchale de Luxembourg, *bergeries* like those of the Marquise de Boufflers, were no longer considered good taste—serious affections, *attachements* as they were called, were now the order of the day, and, if illicit, were yet, by their duration, a step in the right direction.

It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that the morals of society just before the Revolution were an immense improvement on those of the preceding eras—the reign of Louis XV and the still more scandalous period of the Regency—for the influence of the young king and queen had made itself felt, and not only in morals, but in social conditions of all kinds, the accession of Louis XVI had marked the dawning of a new era—the era well described as "the Golden Age of the Revolution." A wave of fresh thought had swept over the exotics of the Galerie des Glaces, a wave of simplicity produced by Rousseau, a wave of humanity created by the philosophers, the *économistes* and *Encyclopédistes*.

Through all the charm and gaiety, the delicious picturesqueness of the Louis XVI era portrayed for us by Watteau, Nattier, Moreau, there ran a vein of seriousness, of awakening altruism. Frivolous women of the world became interested in social subjects; dry books on political economy or on what we should call "The Labour Question" were to be found on many a gilded boudoir table; pretty, powdered heads were full of ideas for bettering the conditions of the poor. Society was no longer indifferent to the miseries of Saint-Antoine; Saint-Antoine, on the contrary, was very much on its mind; "pity of the most active kind," says Lacretelle, "filled all hearts; what the richest men feared most was to appear unfeeling."

The women of society were not behind the men in philanthropic ardour. The Duchesse de Bourbon was

one of the first actually to go district visiting on her own account, and the idea was taken up by Madame de Genlis, who started the "Ordre de la Persévérance," which, though accompanied by much triviality, had nevertheless a practical object.

The members of the order, all gay young men and women of the Court, had adopted the device :

"Candour and loyalty, courage and benevolence,
Virtue, kindness, and perseverance."

The meetings, which took place once a fortnight, ended with a collection for the poor. "When one or more meetings had produced the sum of six hundred francs, a knight and a dame were chosen to go and find out about poor people who needed help, and the knight and dame promised to go together to visit these poor, to verify information about them, and decide to whom the alms should be given. . . . Madame de Sabran," adds Madame de Genlis, "was one of the ladies who carried out this pious mission with the most zeal, intelligence, and kindness." Did Madame de Sabran visit the slums with Boufflers as her knight? History does not tell us, but it is highly probable, for that they both loved "the people" is evident from countless references in their letters to each other. Madame de Sabran is never so happy as amongst the peasants at Anizy and later at Nidervillers ; often on her rambles in the mountains she finds her way into cottages, "où je trouve les meilleurs gens du monde . . . et mon cœur goûte une joie pure." But to whatever class they belonged it was always people that she could help or console to whom her heart went out—"c'est dans ces cas-là, comme tu le sais, que je brille," she says to Boufflers.

The Chevalier, himself, at his best where the sad or suffering were concerned, found this year a new field for his activities. Madame de Boufflers, who had returned to Nancy after the death of Voltaire, had been

attacked by a mysterious malady that baffled the doctors. In the spring of 1779 she became so much worse that the Chevalier and his sister decided he must go to her immediately.

Madame de Boisgelin was kept at Versailles by her duties as lady-in-waiting to the king's old aunts, and so the Chevalier, finally tearing himself away from Madame de Sabran, set forth on the long journey to Nancy.

His first letter to Madame de Sabran, written from Provins, contains an amusing description of his encounter with a German prince who was evidently busy with his country's work of peaceful penetration.

" PROVINS, *Saturday.*
(probably *April*, 1779).

" Riding loses all its value without one's sister at one's side, and particularly when one is turning one's back on her as I am doing. I will not speak of the pain it gives me, because in the first place it is foolish, and besides, speaking of it prevents me finding distraction from it. I shall see you again, and I shall find you just the same—that is, about all that matters to me. . . . I have neither breakfasted nor dined, but I have just supped like an ogre. I might have avoided supping alone, for they said to me when I arrived at my inn : ' There is a prince here ! ' I asked what prince ? ' It is,' they said, ' a Prince de la Salle, who has come here about a canal that he is constructing.' On further inquiry I found out it was the Prince de Salm. Can you imagine their giving a German prince the construction of a canal in Brie ? However, his praises are sung all over Provins. He is polite and affable, he talks to every one, and greets even the children. The people were drawn up in a line to see him, and they were kind enough to let me know so that I might enjoy the same honour ; but I showed an indifference which surprised every one. They came to tell me that he was handsome and easy to get on with, but that he had behind him his two eunuchs—they meant *heiduques* [1]

[1] Hungarian soldiers.

—that made one tremble. In a word, the prince is the idol of the people, which shows that it is a far cry from Provins to Paris !

" Good-bye, sister. . . . I send you a thousand kisses, and only ask for one in return. A thousand loves [' mille amours '] to my Delphine and your Elzéar.

" I open my letter again to tell you that at this moment they are sending off fireworks for the prince ! "

Now that the Chevalier was really gone, Madame de Sabran missed him more than she cared to admit. She writes half tenderly, half mockingly in answer :

" I received your letter from Provins, my brother, or I could not have believed you had really gone. The habit of seeing you every day, and often twice a day, made me turn my head every time any one came into the room, thinking each time it was you, and then I felt so vexed at not seeing you and at the thought that you were only engaged in going farther away from me. . . . I saw your sister and the Maréchale [de Mirepoix] yesterday, and they complained very much at your having gone away without saying good-bye to them. . . . The maréchale thought yesterday afternoon that you had come back from Provins on purpose to atone for the omission. She was in her room without a light and she saw in the distance a man in top-boots, with a riding-whip in his hand, walking rather badly and making a great deal of noise, so she had no doubt it was you. She declares her heart beat with pleasure, but on seeing him closer she recognized . . . Monsieur d'Ernani . . . Good-bye, my brother; I love you with all my heart and for my whole life."

The best of women love to play with fire, and Eléonore de Sabran was certainly indulging in this pleasant pastime when she wrote thus to the Chevalier. To tell a man of Boufflers' fiery temperament that she loved him with all her heart and then expect him to remain " strictly fraternal " in his sentiments is just the sort of impossible feat a good but adventurous woman likes to ask the man who loves her to perform.

She felt so safe herself—no cloud had yet arisen on the serene sky of her life. The Chevalier, in his next letter, speaking of her "peaceful soul," was right, yet little did either of them dream of the storms that could rage beneath that smiling surface!

"I am a hundred times more sad than I ought to be, my sister, and I cannot guess the reason. I have often left you for a long time, for less touching reasons and yet with less regret. . . . I stopped yesterday with the Comte de Bercheny,[1] and for the first time I felt a pang of jealousy. I saw him engrossed in his wife and his estates, happy with the kind of happiness that I shall never know. He does delightful things, and spends his time enjoying them, congratulating himself, and planning fresh ones. His wife seems to join in everything with him, and to love the country as much as he does. I said to myself: 'What good deeds has this man done that Fate should treat him in this way, and what crimes have I committed to be treated so badly?' This was the poison that crept into my veins and is still at work there. Write to me at Nancy, good sister; never have I needed you so much. Tell me of your studies, of your work, of your pleasures, and even of your little troubles, if your peaceful soul ever has them to endure. Adieu; I feel my mind calmer and lighter—kiss your lovely children for me, and tell them that I asked you to."

When at last the Chevalier reached Nancy he found the Marquise de Boufflers still seriously ill, and, with the energy and thoroughness he brought to everything he undertook, he set to work to nurse her back to health. His letters to Madame de Boisgelin[2] are marvels of scientific detail; he even adopts the family physician's habit of speaking about the patient in the first person plural—"yesterday we were to take a grain of ipeca-

[1] The Maréchal de Bercheny had been a friend of de Tressan's at the Court of Lunéville, and at the death of Stanislas had gone to live near him at Nogent l'Artaud near Luzancy.

[2] All these letters to Madame de Boisgelin are quoted from "La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," by Gaston Maugras.

cuanha, but we decided it would be better to delay it," etc. He follows the course of every remedy, the path of every pill, with anxious concern and reports the result to his sister. The trouble, he explains, is congestion of the cæcum, or, as we should say, typhlitis—a complaint that is too often mistaken for appendicitis. Had the marquise lived to-day she would certainly not have escaped an operation; fortunately for her, she was left to the care of the Chevalier, who believed as far as possible in leaving things to nature. "When nature suffices for a cure we must not add medicines to it," he says to Madame de Boisgelin. On this point his mother quite agreed with him; she hated being ill, and unable to amuse herself as usual, and she distrusted doctors and their remedies. "Yesterday," writes the Chevalier, "she took some magnesia, much against her will, and is better, though she will not admit it. . . . She detests medicines, doctors, régimes, and only enjoys eating the things forbidden her. One must have great patience with her, and a little cunning."

Many of Madame de Boufflers' friends had mustered round her during her illness; amongst these was her faithful lover, the Prince de Bauffremont, who had rented part of her estate of Malgrange in order to be near her. Panpan, too, at his little house in Lunéville, was not far off, and, though always loth to leave his retreat, sometimes came to visit her. Madame de Boufflers had also found a new and absorbing pastime, which was no other than learning to spell! Her maid, the devoted Thérèse, who had been with her for years, had lately married a certain Monsieur Petitdemange, evidently a gentleman of parts, for after the wedding he was retained by the marquise in the strange capacity of spelling-master. It was really a very happy idea, for, as we have seen, Madame de Boufflers' spelling had always been uncertain, and now at sixty-eight it was quite exciting to find out what mistakes she had made all her life and correct them.

" See," she writes to her " petit Veau," " how well I put the accents on the a's since our Petitdemange has taught me spelling ! "

Le Veau, who had grown even more selfish with years, still continued for some inscrutable reason to inspire devotion, but the many women who loved him found it almost impossible to lure him from his fireside. Even Madame de Boufflers had to coax and cajole him if she wanted him to come and see her, and even then he sometimes proved churlish. " If I sent the carriage for you, would you come in it ? " she writes plaintively ; " do not mind saying so . . . because I do not want you to arrive in a bad temper. I want my Veau with all his charms, so that I can love him above everything."

Her letters to him at this period are more amusing than ever :

" But, *mon cher* Veau, you scold me as if I were in the wrong. At which moment ought I to have written to you ? . . . Here I am at my fourth page, with my fingers all smudged and in a horrible temper at your injustice. . . . Now that I have a better pen I feel I love you dearly, *mon cher* Veau, and that already I look forward to Tuesday with pleasure."

And again a few days later :

" But, my little Veau, I defy you to tell me that I did not write to you by the usual post. . . . I know nothing sacred but the happiness of my Veau ; it is my most hallowed law, my most cherished duty." (Je ne connais de sacré que le bonheur de mon Veau, c'est la loi la plus sainte, le devoir le plus sacré.)

Nothing could be more delicious than Monsieur Gaston Maugras's descriptions of this little world of Nancy [1]—the people we first met forty years before at Lunéville young and gay, now grown quite old but still as gay as ever. The heart of youth had never failed them : still as at twenty they enjoyed every

[1] In " La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," from which all these letters and details about Madame de Boufflers are taken.

minute of their lives, supped, dined, talked and rhymed, drove miles to see each other, and quite forgot they were all about seventy. Only now and then a faint regret for her lost youth came to Madame de Boufflers which she once expressed in a charming little poem :

" Dans mon printemps
Tous les passants
Me parlaient de tendresse,
Mais à présent
D'aucun amant
Je ne suis la maîtresse.
J'ai fait naître tous les désirs,
J'ai goûté de tous les plaisirs.
Que ces beaux jours
Ont été courts ! "

If Madame de Boufflers had now no lovers, she had at any rate a very devoted friend in the Prince de Bauffremont, whilst Panpan was probably as fond of her as he was capable of being fond of any woman.

As soon as Madame de Boufflers had recovered, the Chevalier went to visit the part of his estate at Malgrange that had not been given up to the Prince de Bauffremont, and from there he wrote again to Madame de Sabran :

" I am not so depressed as the day I wrote to you on my way here, my dear sister. My journey went better than I expected, and I was as pleased to see my mother as if I had not left you ! Lorraine is so charming that when I saw it again I felt sorry your nephew had been given the bishopric of Laon. You would have come to my country, you would have known my mother, and she would have loved you like a daughter. All this gives rise to pleasant thoughts instead of the sad ones that usually take their place with me . . . if you were not always the best of sisters I should be the wretchedest of men !

" I have seen my poor Malgrange, of which only the half is mine ; the prettiest part I gave up to Monsieur de Bauffremont, but I am quite pleased with what is left me. My house is plain and poor, but clean and cheerful. There is an Indian [Spanish ?] chestnut-tree

in my courtyard, planted by the sister of Henri IV, beneath which a hundred and fifty men could dine. I have a little garden bounded by a wood of about a hundred paces round, where one can walk for half a league without going over the same ground twice ; I have fig-trees, a hot-house, and quantities of cherry-trees covered with blossom. I am going to have three or four sheep under my windows, shut in with wire-netting so fine that they will not notice it and will behave as men do who think they are free, because they do not see their chains, so imagine that, in falling in with the scheme of things, they are following their own desires.

" If I am still in this world when you are no longer young, I shall propose our buying a house in the country together, so that you will be able one day to realize all the pleasures you have missed till then. You do not know that one can have the feelings of a mother for trees and plants and flowers ; you do not know that a garden is a kingdom where the prince is never hated, and where he enjoys all the good he does. Your Paris garden gives you no idea of all such happiness. It is only a highway leading to your summer-house ; you know none of your trees and you cut off their heads or arms or legs without thinking. You will see things differently when you know, as I do, that trees have feelings and perceive good and evil."

The Chevalier was, however, soon obliged to tear himself away from these peaceful occupations, and return to his regiment, which this year was quartered in Normandy for the second summer's campaign against England. This arrangement suited Boufflers perfectly, for Normandy was a great deal nearer Anizy than Brittany, and he hoped to get a few days' leave from time to time to go and see Madame de Sabran. She was still in Paris when the Chevalier left Lorraine, but wrote to point out to him that by far the best route to Normandy lay through Paris—a suggestion Boufflers eagerly agreed to, and so the " brother and sister " spent a few more delightful days together before he

went back to his military duties. On his way northward he wrote sadly to Madame de Sabran :

" It is certain that I was never meant to leave you, my dear sister. Already I feel the need of seeing you again, as if I had not seen you for a year. . . . From Douai I shall turn my steps to Anizy, as the Jews turned from Jerusalem to Babylon. Let me feel that you have grown used to me, and that you will notice something is missing. Look on me as a piece of furniture belonging to each of your rooms, and as a necessary one, for I am not made for show. (Je ne suis pas un être de parade.) When you paint, when you read, when you study, when you make verses, when you kiss your children, and when you scold them, think of me, for I have helped you with all this. . . . Write to me often, write me your poetry, your prose, and your questions, and above all tell me often that you love me a little, for without that life would be too sad."

At the end of June Madame de Sabran went to Anizy with her children, and here the Comtesse Auguste d'Aremberg joined her. They were all very happy together at the charming old château with the hospitable Monseigneur de Sabran. The summer days passed peacefully in reading, writing, and painting, and the children provided Madame de Sabran with a great deal of occupation.

" Elzéar," she tells the Chevalier, " is still a sage, and Delphine a little termagant. I spend a great deal of time now in teaching them, and every day I hold a sort of academy at which we read bits of history that interest them. Elzéar's memory, his power of attention, and his cleverness are astonishing ; he already knows more than his sister. . . ."

Since Elzéar was only five at this date he was certainly astonishing, for already he had made his début as an actor.

" Elzéar," his mother writes again, " has just been acting in a play for the whole village ; he had a great

success, as you may imagine. All his audience melted into tears and moisture for it has never been so hot as to-day."

Delphine, too, did not forget her friend the Chevalier, and she wrote him this little letter from Anizy, telling him about "Bonne Amie," a dog he had just given to the children :

"MONSIEUR LE CHEVALIER,

"It seems a very long while since I have seen you We are at Anizy, where I am enjoying myself very much. 'Bonne Amie,' ugly as she is, knows how to make every one love her ; all Anizy adores her, including myself, for I love her very much. She is very nice, but not nicer than you ; I think it would be difficult to be as nice as that. Elzéar is now a big boy ; he is with his tutor. He was very sad at being parted from his wife[1]; it made him ill, but now he is better. I am reading Corneille's tragedies with mamma now. I have read *Polyeucte* and *Cinna*. They amuse me a great deal, because I think them very ridiculous, especially when Emilie says :

"'Tout beau, ma passion devient un peu moins forte.'

"and when Polyeucte says to Pauline :

"'Tout beau, Pauline !'

"I admit to you that I prefer Voltaire and Racine to Corneille. I hope you will agree with me. Your letter pleased me so much. I hope you will write to me sometimes. My brother sends you his love. Mamma has been very ill and has stayed in bed. She sends you her compliments, and is very annoyed because you do not write to her.

"DELPHINE DE SABRAN."[2]

Meanwhile the Chevalier was bored to death at Douai, and was counting the days till he could start

[1] Elzéar's nurse, to whom he was devoted and called his wife.

[2] From "La Marquise de Custine," by Gaston Maugras.

THE COMTESSE DE SABRAN AND HER CHILDREN.
(From a pastel painted by herself about 1779.)

for Anizy. Madame de Sabran was hardly less impatient. Hitherto they had met only in the world; even in her own house in Paris they were never free from the incursion of tiresome callers who were certain to arrive just when they were alone together. Herein, perhaps, had lain Madame de Sabran's safety; great emotions do not thrive in the hurried life of cities, and it had been easy not to take the gay Chevalier seriously with so many other distractions at hand. But now they were to be, for the first time, alone together in the country, and at the thought Eléonore de Sabran felt a thrill of emotion that was surely more than sisterly.

At last one June evening the Chevalier rode up to the door of the château. What a welcome awaited him! The bishop received him charmingly, the children flew to greet him, whilst Madame de Sabran, as she led him through the great rooms where she had spent so many lonely hours, could hardly believe this glorious thing had really happened, and that he was here at last.

Those were golden days that followed. Walking with him in the old garden of the château, riding with him through the green glades of the surrounding forest, she found herself falling more and more under the spell of his fascinations. She, who had never listened to words of love from the many men who had adored her in Paris, never felt her heart beat faster at the sight of any face in the crowd at balls or supper-parties, found herself living only for the sound of one man's footstep, one man's voice—that voice that could ring so joyously or drop suddenly into tenderness, such serious tenderness that came so strangely from those mocking lips. At these moments a great fear took hold of her; she felt herself slipping, slipping, from the safe ground she had always felt beneath her feet, and then, with all her might, she determined not to let herself go, not to love him; why leave the pleasant path of friendship for this unknown road leading—whither? So, having

made this resolution, she treated the Chevalier with more than usually platonic affection, talked to him about the Latin poets, and answered his most ardent speeches in a little frosty voice that completely deceived him, so that at the end of a few days he left Anizy cut to the heart by her coldness.

"When shall I see you again—you whom I love so?" he wrote on his return to Brittany. "When shall I spend months, years, centuries with you? At the end of the month, perhaps, I shall be at Anizy; but only to return here again soon afterwards, a little sadder than this time because I shall have seen more of you, and, above all, because I shall be leaving you for longer. Heaven only unites people who bore each other; it separates those who would be so happy! You will think, my sister, that vanity is getting the better of me, I love you as if you loved me, and I am proud of it. . . . They say, though I do not altogether believe it, that the heart goes on growing colder. If that is so, have a care of yours! Think, you who profess coldness, that you will become an icicle. You will still attract perhaps, like a well-written old book; but you will be no longer loved, because you will never have loved. You might answer to this that you are very madly loved at this moment, whilst you only love very rationally; but, in the first place, that will only last as long as I do, and then in this matter you are being treated like the Maréchal de Saxe about the *cordon bleu*—it was offered him, although he was a heretic, but he was given a hundred years in which to be converted."

Madame de Sabran must have smiled as she read this letter. Never had she felt less like becoming an icicle! However, it was as well that he should think her one, and she replied to his impassioned letters with disconcerting friendliness. She was starting soon, she told him, on a journey to Switzerland with the Comtesse Diane de Polignac, taking Lunéville on their way, and stopping at Strasbourg where Comte Jules de Polignac and Monsieur d'Andlau were to join them.

The Chevalier, who did not share Madame de Sabran's appreciation of the Polignacs, foresaw that they might prove uncongenial travelling companions to the gentle Eléonore, always at a disadvantage amongst hard men and women of the world.

"I cannot reconcile myself to the idea of your journey, in which, through your extreme good-nature, you will be dependent on the follies and caprices of others. I see you as a poor little lamb in the midst of a pack of hounds, with neither the strength to leave them nor to follow."

The shrewd Chevalier was right in his judgment of the Polignacs, for they showed to less advantage amongst the mountains of Switzerland than between the gilded walls of Versailles. Here, in the heart of Nature, their tinsel qualities came out and they looked on everything, as Boufflers said, with "the eyes of courtiers." But Madame de Sabran had all the dreamer's power of shutting herself off from disturbing influences, and she was so happy in the beauty of the world around her that even the Polignacs could not damp her enthusiasm.

"Oh, what a beautiful country is Switzerland, my brother! But what a pity not to see it more in detail! I spend my days admiring all I am seeing and in regretting all I am not seeing. My travelling companion is very kind, but she does not take enough interest, nor does her brother [the Comte Jules]; the grand ways of the Court make them unable to feel the beauties of simple Nature, and prevent them understanding all her worth. As for me, not having the same reasons, I am perfectly happy. You can have no idea of my delight in the midst of these magnificent mountains, with their summits towering to heaven. In these lovely fresh valleys so quiet, so well cultivated, I feel as if I were in the promised land—everything speaks of peace, happiness, liberty, and plenty. . . . I have never felt so well; I am even less tired than the Comtesse Diane, who is stronger than I am, or even than

the Comte Jules, who spends his time sleeping, eating, and laughing at me. We do not see with the same eyes, we do not feel the same, so that we have as much difficulty in understanding each other as if we talked different languages. They both think me mad, and like me none the less for that; but if they were different *I* should like *them* better."

But, for all Madame de Sabran's dislike of courtiers and their ways, the inhabitants of homely Switzerland struck her as far from alluring in appearance. The fashions of Basle were not those of the Rue Saint-Honoré! The chiefs of the Republic looked to her like clodhoppers, and their worthy spouses, she tells Boufflers, "are so strangely attired that, in spite of your indulgence for the fair sex, you would find it hard to make love to them!" Still, they had hearts of gold, and were really much more deserving of appreciation than the Chevalier, whose letters at this moment were all too meagre.

"Whatever you may say, that is not the way to love, and the good people with whom I am, Swiss though they may be, are worth a great deal more than you, and would soon love me better. They do not seem to me usually very clever, but their good-nature makes up for that . . . it is so true that only pretensions make us ridiculous." (Il n'y a que les prétentions qui rendent ridicules.)

But to return to Boufflers and the army of Normandy. All this summer the invasion of England had been regarded as imminent. In June an expedition had actually started out; a second Franco-Spanish armada, consisting of thirty-two ships under Admiral d'Orvilliers, and thirty-four under Dom Gaston sailed for the coast of Devonshire, and a moment of acute alarm was experienced in England. Meanwhile, the ports of northern France were packed with transports ready to carry the waiting troops across the Channel. But once

again the winds were in our favour. The Franco-Spanish armada encountered the British fleet of thirty-eight ships under Admiral Hardy in the Bay of Biscay on its way to England. Hardy, realizing the uselessness of giving action against such superior forces, made for Plymouth, hotly pursued by the enemy, and was eventually overtaken as he reached the harbour; but, just as a battle was beginning, a violent wind arose which dispersed the invading armada, whilst Hardy, under cover of the storm, was able to retire into port. At last the Franco-Spanish fleet, shattered by the winds and decimated by an epidemic of sickness amongst the crews, sailed back again without having fired a shot at the enemy.

The disappointment of the waiting armies was bitter; yet all hope was not abandoned. Every conceivable plan for the invasion of England was discussed in that year of 1779. If only the Channel would dry up! "We quivered with impatience," writes de Ségur, "at the sight of that formidable barrier which barred our way."

Boufflers, too, describes his feelings as he gazed across the grey water at the island whose dim outline has filled with despair the heart of many a would-be conqueror.

"I am at Boulogne-sur-Mer waiting for another destination," he writes in July to Madame de Sabran. "I am badly lodged, but I see the open sea, and even England from my windows. They assure me that, with good glasses, a camp may be seen spread at Dover."

Ah! the tantalization of that sight!—for still between the two camps lay the laughing waters of the Channel! Plans for crossing them were now discussed daily:

"They talk of the expedition with a kind of assurance," Boufflers writes again at the end of July. "There would be three points of embarkation—Dunkerque, Calais, and Boulogne; but at present we are short of

ships, and soon we shall be short of time." A few days later he ends his letter despondently : " Good-bye, my well-beloved ; it is thought that there will be no question of either London or Gibraltar."

Madame de Sabran wrote cheeringly of the latest plans for invasion that were discussed in Paris ; but Boufflers had now lost all hope.

" All your rumours are old liars," he tells her ; " we believe none of them in this part of the world, after always seeing one day give the lie to the last. Time passes, and, as Monsieur de Chabot said to me in speaking of the Straits of Dover : *' I see that ditch there widening every day.'* (Je vois ce fossé-là s'élargir tous les jours.) Our preparations seem to me exorbitant at Havre, and insufficient here. We ought to fight on sea, and beat the English ; but the French appear to care no more to fight than the English to be beaten (les Français n'ont guère plus d'envie de se battre que les Anglais n'en ont d'être battus) ; which may much delay embarkation for this year. . . . They talk of little fire-ships and little bomb-ketches, but I can hardly believe that is serious. . . ."

The wildest schemes were, however, seriously discussed for bringing off the great attempt to cross the Channel ; sea-gigs (*cabrioleis de mer*) were not only talked of but actually assembled in the harbours to assist in the work of transportation—yet still the " Ditch " continued to widen between England and her foes !

So the days dragged on, and Boufflers was alternately buoyed up with hope and plunged into despair. The thought of the conquest of England evidently occupied him less than the idea of winning fame that would make him worthy of Madame de Sabran, and the incompetence of his superior officers who barred his path to glory filled him with impatience :

" I am very much afraid that the poor comedy we

are playing at will last till winter, for according to Monsieur de Chabot and the Chevalier de Coigny, we shall try to cross over even in October or November. At any rate, we shall make a feint of doing so in order to force the English into heavy and continuous expenses on land and sea, which they are believed to be unable to endure. It is certain that, by keeping them in awe of us with continual threats of invasion, we are masters of the operations in America. But, even if we were in a condition to attack the English, should we be in a condition to defend ourselves against the three great enemies—December, January, and February, with which we have never measured our strength ? "

A still greater enemy proved to be sickness, which was spreading amongst the troops on shore and the crews on board the vessels of the fleet. And so by degrees all projects for invasion were abandoned and the great campaign against the " eternal rival " came to an end. Thus perished Boufflers' hopes of glory. Though he still remained with his regiment, quartered in the north of France, there was no longer any opportunity for him to distinguish himself. He had not even achieved promotion, and at forty-one was still only a lieutenant-colonel. Moreover, his finances were at a very low ebb. In the old days all these things would have troubled him but little ; as long as he could lead the roving life he loved he could have lived from hand to mouth quite happily ; position then was nothing to him, money only the wherewithal to spend. But now everything was different ; money and position had acquired a new importance in his eyes as the means wherewith to win Madame de Sabran. Yet at the end of the campaign he had not only failed to improve his position, but was heavily in debt. In desperation he wrote to his sister begging her to come to his rescue by interceding with the minister Maurepas to advance him 40,000 livres on his livings.

Madame de Boisgelin listened sympathetically to the story of his difficulties, and consulted her aunt,

Madame de Mirepoix, as to the best way of helping him over this financial crisis. Between them they evolved a scheme whereby the Chevalier was to part with his abbeys and realize the profits. This plan does not appear to have been carried out, but it seems to have delighted Boufflers, for he wrote in high spirits to thank his sister for the trouble she had taken on his behalf:

"You are a kind child, *ma grande fille*, and in that you resemble our common mother, the Maréchale de Mirepoix. I appreciate all the care that is given to my affairs; they really need some one to bother about them, for I have bothered about them so little in my life that now I do not know how to set about it. But my aunt's letter seems to me a victorious scheme:

"'Il me semble déjà
Que je vois tout cela!'

Add to my merits and my expenses that the year before last I spent seven months with my regiment, last year eight, and perhaps this year I shall spend fifteen, like the Hussar who was thirty-six hours a day in the saddle. Well, my great heart, my interests seem never to have been in such good hands, and if our plan succeeds I will have a 'Te Deum' sung to you by my creditors. . . . Good-bye; a thousand greetings to all the great ones of the Court, dukes and princes, counts and marquesses, and give your cat a rabbit's head from me."

A week later he writes again to Madame de Boisgelin on his way to Eu with his regiment, asking her to do some commissions for him in Paris and borrow the money to pay for them.

"I am marching with my regiment," he tells her, "which tires me a hundred times more than rushing about when away from it. I am as exhausted as if I had done fifty leagues in a post-chaise, and my chest is shattered by a horrible cold that has lasted a quarter of an hour and will last, perhaps, as long again. . . .

Good-bye; I feel that my style is not really natural for if I wrote as I speak my letter would be very husky." [1]

In September Boufflers was again at Anizy for three days. Madame de Sabran had returned from Switzerland far from well; she was never strong, and the sustained effort not to fall in love with the Chevalier was beginning to tell on her health. Whilst at Lausanne she had consulted a famous doctor—for even in these days Lausanne was the home of the medical oracle—and she was taking his remedies when the Chevalier came to stay. But Boufflers, feeling particularly robust at this moment, was inclined to be sceptical about illness and its cure. "I find it difficult to believe that health, spirits, and happiness are to be found in little bottles!" By way of bracing her, he wrote after he had left Anizy to remonstrate with her on the subject of her health: "Take care of yourself, distract yourself; think only of your ills in order to cure, but not to grieve about them, and remember that you are more loved than any one has ever been." As a warning, he reminds her of Madame de Trudaine, the wife of the Intendant de Finances, who had allowed herself to relapse into invalidism and left her husband to entertain the guests who crowded to her parties. This comparison, not unnaturally, made Madame de Sabran furious, and she wrote back a letter full of indignant reproaches:

"I am cured for life of telling you of my troubles or my sufferings. I dread, more than anything, that you should regard me as hysterical, as a Madame de Trudaine. I can think of nothing more revolting."

The Chevalier, cut to the heart at having wounded her, wrote back begging her forgiveness.

"How was it that you did not see, in the letter of which you complain, that my only object was to give

[1] Both these letters to Madame de Boisgelin are quoted from "Le Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," by Gaston Maugras.

you a shake, which I believed to be necessary in your condition? I acted like a mother who, seeing her child asleep in charcoal fumes, beats it in order to awaken it Do you suppose I think a word of all I said to you? Am *I* to be accused of thinking unkindly of you—I, who spend my life adoring you, who continually admire in you a thousand things that you take as a matter of course? Once again, I wanted only to startle you, to rouse you, to awaken you."

No doubt the Chevalier meant well, but unfortunately he failed to realize that he himself was the main cause of her sufferings. For by this time Madame de Sabran was no longer able to hide the truth from herself. She knew now that she loved him—loved him with all the wild, pent-up passion of a woman of nearly thirty, who has never loved before. Since he loved her too, and never ceased telling her so, the *dénouement* had seemed to her quite simple. They were both free, why then did he not come to her and say?—"Let us have done with this farce of platonic friendship! We love each other—let us be married!" But this is precisely what the Chevalier did not do. What could be his reason? The disparity in their positions, to which he had so often referred, seemed to her unworldly mind an obstacle not worth considering and she tortured herself with questionings as to whether there was any other cause for his silence. At last, finding the uncertainty unbearable, she resolved to end it by seeing him no more. This winter she would not return to Paris, but remain at Anizy and try to forget him. Boufflers, hearing from a friend of her intention and the depression into which she had fallen, wrote frantically to inquire the reason:

"Whence comes this sudden and profound sadness, this frightful despondency of which you showed no sign whilst I was with you? Once again, you are not ill; you suffer because everything that lives suffers more or less. . . . I dared to flatter myself for a moment that the cause was partly the separation from the one who

lives only for you. . . . But if that were so would you take a pleasure in staying on at a place where he dare not go to find you? Why spend the winter away from me? Let me believe what I heard from your lips. If what you said was true, if I am necessary to you, why will you fly from me. . . ?"

Again and again he implores her to tell him what is troubling her, and he will show her "the tenderness of a mother and a friend."

"You would hide from me all that is in your mind and all that darkens your imagination, as if any one were more worthy of your confidence, as if any one knew better how to soothe or share your trouble, as if any one loved you better or were better loved! . . . I kiss you, I press your heart to mine—no two, I hope, will ever have been more united."

What could she do in the end but confess the whole truth? When they met again she told him frankly all that was in her heart.

"I love you. Why do you not ask me to marry you?"

And, to her dismay, Boufflers answered firmly that he could not dream of marrying a rich woman with two children to whom her fortune belonged, whilst he himself had nothing to bring her but his debts. His position would be intolerable in the eyes of the world.

Madame de Sabran listened despairingly. They loved each other. What did anything else matter? Why care for the world's opinion?

He cared very much. In imagination he could hear the malicious tongues of Paris discussing such a marriage: "Boufflers had done well for himself in marrying the rich widow who could pay his debts!" Would they ever dream—those cynics of the salons—that if she had not a *sou* in the world he would have chosen her out of all other women for his wife? Never! He would count in their eyes only as a fortune-hunter, an adventurer, and all his pride rose in revolt at the thought.

Nothing, he said vehemently, would persuade him to marry until he had an independent position.[1]

She could only submit to his decision. In vain she tried to break with him, to keep to her resolution of staying away from Paris so as to forget him; but in the end she yielded to his entreaties and returned to the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré.

The Chevalier, in Paris for the winter, was once more continually at her house; but, though their love was no longer "fraternal," nothing was changed in their relations, and, in spite of all Boufflers' impassioned love-making, Madame de Sabran remained virtuous as ever. So months and eventually years went by—a period of which we have almost no record—and still in April 1781 we find Madame de Sabran holding the Chevalier at bay.[2] "A propos ayez la bonté de ne plus me tutoyer dans vos lettres; cela les rend trop semblables à d'autres," she ends one of her letters crushingly, but the Chevalier, quite undaunted, replies: "Et pourquoi me défendez-vous de te tutoyer? De peur, dis-tu, cher amour, que mes lettres ne ressemblent à d'autres. . . . Ce *vous* me glace; il me semble que rien de ce que tu m'inspires ne s'accorde avec lui. C'est comme s'il fallait toujours te faire la révérence au lieu de t'embrasser."

The month of May found them once again together at Anizy.

All around the château fields of golden buttercups waved in the breeze, nightingales sang in the thickets, the forest trees were breaking into tender leaf. And with the madness of the spring, with the song of the birds and the scent of lilac quivering in the air, Eléonore de Sabran flung virtue to the winds and Stanislas de Boufflers became her lover.

[1] From "La jeunesse de Madame de Sabran," by Lucien Perey.

[2] See Appendix, p. 423.

CHAPTER V

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

So Eléonore de Sabran had crossed the Rubicon. After this there was no going back. For four years she had held out against Boufflers' powers of fascination, had refused to be drawn into an intimacy of the kind that her world regarded all too indulgently. Now at last love had proved too strong for her, and she had yielded —but at what a cost! Other women of her day might enter easily into *liaisons*; not so Madame de Sabran. For she was not of her day or of her world. To her, the surrendering of her virtue was a sacrifice that cost her all her peace of mind. The indulgent attitude of her contemporaries towards such *attachements* afforded her no consolation; they would judge her leniently as one of themselves, a woman who could take a lover lightly and as lightly let him go. This great love of hers, the most sacred thing in her life, would be mentioned in the same breath as that of Madame de Cambis for the Duke of Richmond, of the Duchesse de Coigny for the Duc de Lauzun, of Madame de Polignac for the Comte de Vaudreuil. No one would understand that it was different!

Yet, alternating with these bitter moments of remorse were hours of happiness more exquisite than she had ever known before. Just to be with him, to hear his voice—and honour, virtue, duty, all seemed but empty words and love the only and the great reality!

"I love you," she tells him, "as people loved once, as they love no more, and as they will never love again."

(Je t'aime comme on aimait jadis, comme l'on n'aime plus, et comme l'on n'aimera jamais.) Her letters from this time onwards are entirely changed ; now it is no longer " vous " and " mon frère," but " tu " and " mon enfant " and words of adoration—" my husband, my lover, my friend, my universe, my soul, my God ! "

And Boufflers ? Boufflers, " le plus aimable des fous," Boufflers, the *séducteur*, the man who had always laughed at constancy, the wit, the rake, the cynic, loved her with all the ardour and freshness of first love ; his former experiences seem neither to have blunted his sensibilities nor weakened the strength of his emotions :

" How right I was to give my soul wholly up to yours ! You combine everything that is touching with everything that charms, and I have never thought of you for long together without smiling and without, at the same time, having tears in my eyes." (Jamais je n'ai pensé quelque temps de suite à vous sans en même temps sourire et avoir les larmes aux yeux.)

Yet since he so adored her, why did he draw her into a *liaison* that brought her so much suffering ? In our eyes it seems unpardonable, and indeed from any point of view it must be admitted that Boufflers was very much to blame ; but an understanding of the period in which they lived certainly helps to mitigate his offence. In France of the eighteenth century, marriage was so essentially a business transaction that to marry merely for love would have been almost to make oneself ridiculous. The Chevalier de Boufflers, therefore, in marrying Madame de Sabran, would have made her look foolish in the eyes of the world, for he would have been regarded as a fortune-hunter thinking only of her money, whilst as her adorer the genuineness of his feeling for her would be believed in, her prestige would be enhanced by having fixed the wandering fancy of a man so notorious for his inconstancy, and in losing her heart to the gay Chevalier she would only endear herself to her world by proving that she

was human after all. Madame de Sabran was, however, very careful to avoid scandal; she would never *afficher* herself with Boufflers, and strangers meeting them together would not have guessed that they were lovers.

Her discretion naturally fanned the flame of Boufflers' devotion. He might go to her house and find her surrounded by a dozen other guests, smiling on other admirers, and he would have to go away again without a single tender word or look. This, of course, was excellent for him. Her moods, too, prevented him from tiring of her; she was never twice the same, and still maddened him with her elusiveness. The Chevalier, on his part, was evidently still more maddening; so, in spite of their love for each other, they continued to quarrel as before. And alas! though he adored her, Boufflers still indulged in wandering fancies that cut her to the heart.

In the summer of 1783, two years after the memorable May at Anizy, a tragic scene took place between them. The Chevalier was obliged to go to Brussels, and Madame de Sabran was to meet him at Valenciennes on his way there. The day came and she arrived at the inn prepared for rapturous greetings from her lover, when she encountered Boufflers in the company of a local *belle*—a lady of Valenciennes, referred to in her letters as his "Dulcinea del Toboso"—to whom he was paying a great deal of attention. Madame de Sabran immediately concluded the worst, and, without leaving him time to explain the situation, fled to her room and burst into floods of tears. So she had a rival! And such a rival! How *could* Boufflers admire this coarse, silly, provincial creature?

There is perhaps nothing more chastening to a woman's pride than to see the other objects of her lover's affections; the belief that she herself must possess some rare and subtle power of enchantment perishes miserably as she gazes on the obvious charms

of her rival. So Eléonore de Sabran, looking at his "Dulcinea" of Valenciennes, felt more than wounded, she felt humiliated, insulted, and a great tide of anger rose in her towards the man who had dealt this blow to her pride.

At that moment the step she knew so well sounded on the threshold, the door opened, and Boufflers, pale and shaken, stood before her. She saw that he was ill, and at any other time the mother-love that was so great a part of her feeling for him would have made her go to him and wrap him round with tenderness; but, though the tears poured down her cheeks as she looked at him, and her heart was wrung with pity, she was too angry to spare him.

She broke in with a torrent of reproaches. The fierceness of her anger shook her fragile body, her pansy-coloured eyes flashed fire; she raved at him whilst all the while sobs nearly choked her. Boufflers, white to the lips, listened in horror and dismay. How could he make her understand that his philandering with the charmer of Valenciennes meant nothing, was only one of those idle fancies that come to men at moments and hold no vestige of love? And at her injustice—as he believed it—his own anger at last arose, and he, too, broke forth into a storm of indignation, calling her "Alecto," "termagant," telling her that she would kill his love for her. At that she wept more bitterly, yet she could not forgive him.

But, even whilst she stormed she loved him, hated herself for hurting him.

They parted at last, shattered—Boufflers no less than Madame de Sabran, for with all his frivolity, he had none of the cold-hearted indifference of the *séducteur* who can break a woman's heart and ride away with a smile on his lips. On the contrary, he was perfectly miserable at having made her unhappy, literally *ill* with misery, as we see from the letter he wrote her next day on his way to Brussels:

" . . . You left me cut to the heart ! I see no hope of happiness in the future, all my illusions are falling from me like leaves under the cold frosts of autumn when every day foretells a sadder morrow. My courage fails me, I am conscious of a grief too great for my strength, and for my years, for at forty-five love should hardly be love, but should have turned into gentle and peaceful friendship. How far are we from that ! I do not wish to reproach you, but my heart is wrung with grief ; such suffering is more than I can bear. You showed me all the injustice of a child of fifteen ; you saw nothing as it really was, you heard nothing that I said to you, and I live in dread of seeing these horrible moments recur, since it is impossible to prevent things that happen for no cause. Yet, for all this, dear child, you are more to me than the peace and happiness of which you deprive me. So I pardon you for my griefs, past, present, and future, and I ask your forgiveness for showing them to you. . . . I put my faith in your children ; the pleasure of seeing them again will have partly dispelled your gloomy mood. Love, or at any rate kindness, will do the rest, and, as the Vicar of Wakefield said from the depths of his dungeon, ' Perhaps we shall see happy days again.' "

What could she do but forgive him ? What can any woman do when faced with the eternal problem of a man's roving nature ? If he has ceased to love her the matter is, of course, quite simple, for nothing in the world will bring him back ; but, if she knows that in his heart he is true to her, how is she to take his passing fancies for other attractions ? Men and women of the world tell her that to show jealousy is fatal ; experience teaches her that submissiveness is equally disastrous. No man loves for long the woman he feels he can treat as he pleases—the meek and abject creature who will welcome him back with a smile after each defection. Madame de Sabran, bitterly as she repented her outbreak, had perhaps taken the course most likely to prevail with a man of Boufflers' temperament—to fly into a tearing rage was, on the whole, the best thing

she could do. She had shown him that, gentle and loving though she was, she would not bear too much, and, if she had made him angry, she had not bored him for a moment.

It was the oldest situation in the world, and Madame de Sabran came to the old inevitable conclusion. He was all the world to her—what did anything else matter? She knew that he was *true to her in spirit*, and so she must take him as he was with all his faults, since she could not change his nature.

Casting her pride to the winds, she wrote back to him:

"Do not hate me, my child, because I love you too much. Have pity on my weakness, laugh at my folly, and may it never trouble the peace of your heart. . . . Go, be free as the air; abuse your liberty if you will, and I would rather have it so than make you feel the bondage of a chain too heavy. . . . Good-bye, dear heart; love me if you can, or rather if you will; only remember that no one in this world loves and cherishes you as I do, and that I care only for life as long as I can spend it with you."

(Ne me hais pas, mon enfant, parce que je t'aime trop. Aie pitié de ma faiblesse, ris de ma folie, et qu'elle ne trouble jamais la paix de ton cœur. . . . Va, sois libre comme l'air, abuse si tu veux de ta liberté, et je l'aimerai encore mieux que de te faire sentir le poids d'une chaîne trop pesante. . . . Adieu, mon cœur; aime-moi si tu veux, ou plutôt si tu peux; mais songe seulement que rien dans le monde ne t'aime et ne te chérit comme moi, et que je n'estime la vie qu'autant que je la passerai avec toi.)

Boufflers, whose mercurial temperament made prolonged melancholy impossible, answered gaily:

"Let me tell you, dear and naughty child, that I am beginning to feel a little better in body and spirit. I have been making wise reflections and realized that

I was mad and you were mad, but that I love you and you love me, and so for both of us more good will come of this than evil. Let us say no more about it; you should have kissed me as much as you scolded me. I should have laughed as much as I was hurt by it; but the past will return no more, and sorrow will remain with it. . . . I take up my pen again to ask you to kiss your two darlings for me. . . . Content yourself with the thought that all the faults are on your side and all perfections on mine! . . ."

Madame de Sabran, still in a softened mood, answered:

"Yes, my child, I forgive you all your tempers, past, present, and future. I suffer too much when I have to be cross with you, and so I find it better to love you and tell you so. Whatever you do we always come back to that, and so once and for all I make a resolution to abide by it. I give you full indulgence for all your amusements, and I feel more than ever that the best way to keep you is to give you perfect freedom. There is in man a vague restlessness that makes him seek happiness only where he is not. You will no sooner be far away from me than you will want to come back, and I promise you beforehand that you will always be welcomed. . . . This letter is our treaty of peace that nothing can ever break—not even time. After this I kiss you and love you more than ever."

(Oui, mon enfant, je te pardonne tes maussaderies passées, présentes et futures. Je souffre trop quand il faut te bouder, et je trouve bien mieux mon compte à t'aimer et à te le dire. Quelque chose que tu fasses, il faut toujours en venir là; ainsi je prends une bonne fois la résolution de m'y tenir. Je te donne indulgence plénière pour toutes tes distractions, et je sens mieux que jamais que la meilleure manière de te conserver est de te donner la clef des champs. Il y'a dans l'homme une inquiétude vague qui fait qu'il ne se trouve bien qu'où il n'est pas. Tu ne seras pas plus tôt loin de moi, que tu désireras y revenir, et je te promets d'avance que tu seras toujours bien reçu. . . . Cette lettre est notre traité de paix, que rien ne pourra

jamais rompre, pas même le temps. D'après cela, je t'embrasse et je t'aime plus que jamais.)

This treaty of peace was destined, alas! to be broken many times in the course of their lives! How often she was yet to resolve to break with him, to declare her intention of "bidding him an eternal adieu," yet always end by forgiving him, always come back to the fact that, whatever he did, she could not do without him.

Boufflers, on his part, was equally unable to throw off the spell she had cast over him; however much she might scold or exasperate him, she was still the only woman in the world of whom he never wearied. Even her rages—her "folles colères" as he called them—were more charming than other women's favours! Years afterwards, when they had quarrelled many times again, he wrote to her:

"I love to think of all your faults, for they are nearly as lovable as you are; without them you would be too perfect, your behaviour and your personality and your honour would be like those regular faces that have no character. When I think of your beautiful soul, of your good heart, of your frankness, and of that 'greatness' that Prince Henry[1] detected so well in you, and then remember at the same time your teasings, your follies, your wilfulness, your tempers, I am reminded of Hesiod's Venus, surrounded by little playful Cupids, naughty, badly behaved, but delicious enough to eat!"

(J'aime à penser à tous tes torts, parce qu'ils sont presque aussi aimables que toi; sans eux, tu serais trop parfaite, et ta conduite, et ton caractère, et ton honneur ressembleraient à ces figures régulières en tout point qui n'ont jamais de physionomie. Quand je pense à ta belle âme, à ton bon cœur, à ta franchise, à cette grandeur que le prince Henry a si bien démêlée en toi, et que je me rappelle en même temps tes malices, tes folies, tes obstinations, tes colères, il me semble voir la Vénus d'Hésiode entourée de petits amours

[1] Prince Henry of Prussia.

espiègles, méchants, mal morigénés, mais tous jolis à manger.)

Nothing Boufflers ever wrote brings her before us so vividly as this little description, and in the letter she wrote him soon after the tragedy of Valenciennes she shows us Boufflers in a few lightning touches :

"How unjust I am, my child, and how good you are to love a foolish old thing like me ! It is true that it was for you and through you that I lost my senses, for if I remember right I had in my youth as much good sense and more reason in my little finger than you have now in your whole body. That happy time is no more ; the face of everything is changed ; time and love have so altered me that you alone can recognize me. . . .

"I could not read without emotion what you say about your coming blindness.[1] . . . All that you have to do, and that would certainly cure you, is to put a bandage over your eyes—at night, I mean, for you are cunning enough to suspect that I have some object in giving you this sage advice and to believe that I have reason to dread your little piercing eyes. No, my child, why should I have recourse to illusion ? Our love has no need of it ; it was born without it and will endure without it. For it was certainly not the effect of my charms—which had ceased to exist when you first knew me—that kept you to me, nor was it your Huron-like manners, your gruff and absent-minded air, your true and pithy sallies, your large appetite, or your deep slumber whenever one wants to talk to you, that made me love you to distraction ; it was a certain something that sets our souls in tune, a certain sympathy that makes me think and feel like you. For beneath that rough exterior you conceal the mind of an angel and the heart of a woman. You combine all contrasts, and there is no being in heaven or on earth more lovable or loved than you. Come to me, then, as soon as possible. . . . Good-bye, my child ; good-bye, my friend ; good-bye, my lover ; never have I

[1] Boufflers often suffered from his eyes and then imagined he was going blind ; but there was nothing seriously the matter.

said this word with greater pleasure, never felt so much the happiness of living only for the one I love."

(Que je suis injuste, mon enfant ; et que tu es bon d'aimer une vieille folle comme moi ! Il est vrai que c'est pour toi et par toi que j'ai perdu la tête ; car, s'il m'en souvient bien, j'avais, dans mon jeune âge, un sens très juste et plus de raison dans mon petit doigt que tu n'as même à présent dans toute ta personne. Cet heureux temps n'est plus ; tout a changé de face, et le temps et l'amour m'ont si fort métamorphosée, qu'il n'y a plus que toi qui puisses me reconnaître. . . .

Je n'ai pu lire sans attendrissement tout ce que tu dis sur ton aveuglement futur. . . . La seule chose que tu devrais faire, et qui te guérirait sûrement, ce serait de mettre un bandeau sur tes yeux, la nuit bien entendu, car ta malice pourrait soupçonner quelque intérêt de ma part dans ce sage conseil, et croire que j'ai quelque raisons pour redouter tes petits yeux perçants. Non, mon enfant, je n'ai que faire de ton illusion ? notre amour n'en a pas besoin ; il est né sans elle, et il subsistera sans elle ; car ce n'est sûrement pas l'effet de mes charmes, qui n'existaient plus lorsque tu m'as connue, qui t'a fixé auprès de moi ; ce n'est pas non plus tes manières de Huron, ton air distrait et bourru, tes saillies piquantes et vraies, ton grand appétit et ton profond sommeil quand on veut causer avec toi, qui m'ont fait t'aimer à la folie ; c'est un certain je ne sais quoi qui met nos âmes à l'unisson, une certaine sympathie qui me fait penser et sentir comme toi. Car sous cette enveloppe sauvage tu caches l'esprit d'un ange et le cœur d'une femme. Tu réunis tous les contrastes, et il n'y a point d'être au ciel et sur la terre qui soit plus aimable et plus aimé que toi. Viens me voir à cause de cela le plus tôt qu'il te sera possible. . . . Adieu, mon enfant ; adieu, mon ami ; adieu, mon amant ; jamais je n'ai prononcé ce mot avec plus de plaisir, et n'ai si bien senti le bonheur d'exister uniquement pour ce qu'on aime.)

Yet, though she had forgiven him, Madame de Sabran's mind was not altogether at rest about Boufflers' " Dulcinea del Toboso," for soon after this, when he

joined her at Spa, where she was taking the waters, Dulcinea wrote him from Valenciennes two letters so affectionate that Madame de Sabran says they made her sick—" deux lettres d'un si bon ton qu'elles me faisaient *mal au cœur*." However, she kept to her resolution of leaving the Chevalier his liberty, and in her future references to Dulcinea valiantly summons her sense of humour to the rescue ; by this means she evidently succeeded in laughing Boufflers out of his fancy, for four years later, when he was in Africa, we find her writing gaily to describe his " ancienne Dulcinée del Toboso," who happened to be sitting near her at the play one evening in Valenciennes.

" Even to other eyes than mine she has really very few charms ; she is quite round now, as she has grown much fatter, so the Comtesse Auguste declares. She amused me a thousand times more than the play. She was very much taken up with two officers who kept her turning her head continually from right to left so that neither should be jealous ; she laughed and talked louder than the actors. This time I was jealous, not on account of her successes, but of her happiness, and I said to myself: ' She knew the poor African [Boufflers], she loved him, she did more than this, and she was able to forget him and love other people ; how could that be ? I should like to have her recipe—I, poor fool, who wear myself out in vain regrets. . . . My life will be no longer than hers, yet she turns hers to account and I throw mine to the winds. Ah ! she is far wiser than I am. . . .' "

Yet did she really envy her ? does any woman who has known a great love and endured its suffering envy the woman who has lived only for passing fancies ? " How happy are the people who have good heads and no hearts ! " (Que les gens qui n'ont point de cœur, mais une bonne tête sont heureux !) Madame de Sabran once wrote in the bitterness of her heart, yet never would she have changed with those men or women who pass through the world and miss its

greatest experience. So, though she suffered, she lived to look back on her life and say with Boufflers: "*J'ai vécu!*"

. . . . .

Madame de Sabran had quite recovered her usual gaiety when she arrived at Spa with her friend Madame d'Andlau that summer of 1783.

Spa in the eighteenth century was very amusing and cosmopolitan; foreigners of all kinds were to be found there taking the waters with the gay world of Paris; amongst them were many English, for now that the war with England was ended they had returned in crowds to France, and no animosity prevailed between the two nations. "Anglo-manie" was, in fact, more the fashion than ever; all the men wanted to appear English, and had begun to exchange silk and embroidery for the plain cloth coats and the sporting air that was in vogue across the Channel. Madame de Sabran seems to have had a peculiar affinity with English people, and at Spa she made many friends amongst them. "There are hardly any but English here this year," she writes to the Chevalier; "but they are sometimes as agreeable or even more agreeable than others." And she goes on to tell him of a really serious devotion she has inspired in an elderly English heart:

"I must tell you . . . that I am going to be married, or, at any rate, I have a husband all ready—rich, sensible, constant, and of an age that more nearly approaches youth than yours, if it is true, as they say, that extremes meet—it is Lord Murray. I see you smile from here, but I don't know why, for he is a more dangerous rival than he appears. He is so terribly in love with me that he asked Milady —— to make me what he calls a proposal in all seriousness, for he thinks I can be his wife and he can be my husband. He is quite prepared to follow me to France, or even to hell so as never to leave me, for he asks no more than to abjure his religion, recognizing, as he

does, no god but love. This folly has amused us all for several days, and I only await your consent to end the matter. Do not keep us waiting for it too long, or an attack of apoplexy might occur to mar the festive day ; the poor man has a tendency to it, and love is very injurious under the circumstances. . . . .Here is a good opportunity for you to get rid of me, and I have no doubt you will seize it. . . ."

Other Englishmen at Spa this year were Lord du Moley, whom Madame de Sabran found " de fort bonne compagnie," and the pathetic young Sir Charles Asgill, who, three years before, when he was only seventeen, had been taken prisoner by the Americans at the capitulation of York Town and sentenced to be hanged in retaliation for the execution of an American prisoner. He was eventually released at the request of Marie Antoinette.

" Milor Asgill . . . ," writes Madame de Sabran, " lay for six months between life and death ; at every moment he expected his sentence, and, by an unheard-of refinement of cruelty, the gallows were placed in front of his windows and he was shown to the people for money like an animal at a fair. He is here to recover from the injury the fright caused him, and is going on to Versailles to thank our little queen. I think he will have a great success there ; he is twenty, and has a pale and interesting face on which the traces of his misfortunes can still be seen. His unhappy mother interests me still more ; I cannot think without a shudder of what she must have suffered. She is here with him, but in such a frightful state of mind that she can see no one."

Madame de Sabran's greatest friend amongst the English at Spa was Mrs. Buller, who as Susan Yarde had married Francis Buller, an eminent lawyer.[1] " She

[1] Susan Yarde was an heiress, and brought Churston Court to the Bullers. Her son took the name of Yarde-Buller and her grandson became Lord Churston. Unfortunately, none of her letters or papers have been kept by her family, yet there must have been many of interest, for her friends in France corresponded with her all through the Revolution.

loves me really as if I were her own child," Madame de Sabran tells the Chevalier; "she is the most amiable person in the world, and distracts me in your absence —everything else is intolerable. We read together Latin, Italian, and English, of which I began the day before yesterday to learn the verbs, and I mean to learn it seriously—all the more because you like it and I want to do everything to please you!"

The Chevalier, who came to spend a few days with Madame de Sabran at Spa, entirely agreed with her opinion of "la mère Buller," and years afterwards, when he was obliged to fight the English off the coast of Africa, he could hardly bring himself to fire on them —"I shall remember these poor devils belong to the same country and speak the same language as the best of our friends." Mrs. Buller was indeed so fascinating that she even inspired Elzéar de Sabran, now aged nine, with passionate admiration, and he wrote her a long ode in six cantos called "La Charriétade."

At Spa Mrs. Buller was Madame de Sabran's one consolation after the Chevalier's return to his regiment, and they spent all their time together whilst frivolous Madame d'Andlau was out amusing herself at balls and parties. "I live a great deal alone," wrote Madame de Sabran, "or with my Englishwoman, who does not like society any more than I do. I leave *la mère* d'Andlau to her flirtations and to turn all the heads of England. You never saw anything like it—at every moment she receives notes and bouquets, and every one wants to talk and dance with her."

The arrival of the Buller family from England provides Madame de Sabran with a great deal of amusement:

"Nothing could be funnier than Mrs. Buller in the bosom of her family, for this year she is travelling with all her relations and a brother who is as like Grandgousier as two peas. He is, without exaggeration, as

fat as the Duc d'Orléans and M. de Montesson put together, and tall in proportion. He does not eat as much as you, but he would drink the whole cellar at a meal—he is a renowned drinker. I never saw anything so extraordinary as that face for he does not speak a word of French—if I were younger I should be afraid of his eating me. He makes my bed shake when he gets into his the other side of a thin partition which happily separates us. She has also two sisters . . . one has gone to Düsseldorf . . . the other reminds me of Miss Brigite, sister of Mr. Alworthy (*sic*) ; she is a kind and excellent woman.[1] In fact, I am enjoying myself here as much as if I were in England, for there are only English here."

From Spa Madame de Sabran went on with Madame d'Andlau to Holland, and her account of this journey is very amusing. Their names were both so well known that they decided to travel incognito as Madame de Jobert and Madame Bertin, and by this means they were able to go in public coaches, which was not only cheaper but offered more opportunities for studying human nature than driving in state through the country. From Brussels to Antwerp they went in a boat that, as Madame de Sabran said, contained a sort of Noah's Ark collection of human oddities, and she spent a happy day sketching them. Here yet another English admirer awaited her :

" I made at once the conquest of a young English commercial traveller, who never left us all through the voyage, and from time to time treated us to beer by way of refreshing us, but nearly made us drunk, for out of politeness we did not like to refuse. He is still here, but, as we are not in the same inn, we have lost sight of each other, which distresses me very much."

The summer of 1783 ended delightfully for Madame

[1] This paragraph evidently refers to Mrs. Buller's brother and sisters-*in-law* ; she herself was an only child.

de Sabran and her children, for they were all invited to stay with the Prince de Ligne at his wonderful château of Bel Œil. The prince was one of the happiest of human creatures, and he loved to make every one around him happy too. His passion for gardening never made him forget to be philanthropic. "Lovers of gardens," he said, "be lovers of humanity! . . . Let us do good, let us do good to others!" The animal world must be made happy too—especially all young things: "Let us make to live and to increase the people of the air, of the earth, and of the water!" He shared the Chevalier de Boufflers' sympathy with trees, and believed that they could feel resentment if they were not treated kindly.

Life at Bel Œil was delicious. "The mornings were given up to study; music, literature, drawing occupied every one in turn. . . . The prince, as soon as he was dressed, went down to his island of Flore with a book in his hand, worked in his library, or looked at his gardens. The guests walked, rode, drove, or sailed on the great lake . . . and spent fine evenings on the water with music and moonlight. . . . The garden paths were well laid so as not to wet the ladies' feet, and bowers of roses, jasmine, orange-flowers, and honeysuckle led to where they went to bathe. Here and there in quiet corners were shady seats and rustic shelters where each one could find her knitting, her netting, her writing things, and a raven's quill."[1]

It was here that the prince had planned a splendid entertainment for the autumn. The great play of Beaumarchais, "Le Mariage de Figaro," was just written and had been banned by the king from the Court theatre; but the Prince de Ligne decided to produce it at his private theatre of Bel Œil, and as actors he had chosen his daughter-in-law the Princesse Hélène de Ligne, Madame de Sabran, Elzéar, and the Chevalier de Boufflers.

[1] "Histoire de la Princesse Hélène de Ligne," by Lucien Perey.

" All that you suggest is very tempting, my poor Charlot," Boufflers wrote in answer to the prince's invitation; " but, on studying my marching orders, it seems that I shall see everything except my regiment. . . . Dear prince, I love you as if I saw you every day of my life." [1]

The Chevalier succeeded, however, in getting leave, and was able to join the party at Bel Œil. The play was a tremendous success; Madame de Sabran took the part of the Comtesse, the Princesse Hélène was Suzanne, and Elzéar made a charming Chérubin; but it was Boufflers, with his *verve endiablée*, who, as Figaro, brought down the house.

The prince himself took the humble rôle of Double-main, for he was well aware that he had no dramatic talent, and could not be given a leading part; so whenever he acted he was quite content merely to bring in a letter on a tray or announce an arrival. Even then he usually missed his cue, and failed to make his entry at the right moment; but, once on the stage, he was so happy there that it was difficult to get him off again, and he would murmur in an undertone to the actors, " I am not in your way, am I? "

How often in the years to come the players in that gay production of " Figaro " must have looked back with passionate regret at their folly in encouraging a play that was to have such far-reaching and disastrous consequences! Little did they dream of the dynamic forces embodied in the words they uttered: " Because you are a noble lord you think yourself a great genius! Nobility, fortune, rank, position—all these cause pride. . . . What have you done for so many good things? You took the trouble to be born, and that is all! " Words that to our ears seem so trite, so feeble, but that to the world of 1784 came as a revelation of wit and daring! Hitherto no one had dreamt of publicly criticizing the great; now, for the first time, it was

[1] " Histoire de la Princesse Hélène de Ligne," by Lucien Perey.

whispered that the idols they had worshipped had feet of clay.

Boufflers, ever at war with courts and courtiers, at heart a democrat, threw himself into the rôle of Figaro with all the ardour of conviction, and, as he declaimed the famous monologue, he was far from foreseeing that the words he spoke would go to swell the mighty tide of insurrection that was soon to sweep away the misguided world that applauded them.

CHAPTER VI

"VOILÀ DU NOUVEAU!"

THE year 1784 had arrived, the year that brought with it events both grave and gay to the Court of France. On the surface all was yet serene, the Golden Age was still in full swing. Never had the royal family shown greater zeal for the welfare of their subjects, and the nobles, following their lead, had thrown themselves with ardour into the cause of philanthropy. "*Sensibilité*," says Taine, "a feeling for the troubles of the oppressed, had taken the place of feudalism in the hearts of the great. They no longer hide their tears, they feel it an honour to be men; they are human, they become intimate with their inferiors. . . . They think of the poor, and glory in thinking of them."

During the terrible winter of this year the king and queen had done everything in their power to relieve the sufferings of the poor of Paris; huge fires were lit in the courtyard of the palace at which they might come and warm themselves, whilst rows of carts continually carried fuel to their houses.

"The king," as the Chevalier de l'Isle wrote to the Prince de Ligne, "shows himself every day a good husband, a good father, a good man; it is impossible to see him without loving him sincerely, and without respecting his uprightness. I assure you that we are very fortunate to have that pair on the throne; may Heaven, that has placed them there, in His goodness keep them there long!"

The queen, though not so benevolent in appearance

as her homely consort, was no less charitable. She gave away two or three hundred thousand francs out of her own purse, depriving herself of luxuries for the purpose; she founded a home for the blind in Paris; inaugurated at Versailles an almshouse for old women, and went to visit the deaf-mutes, taking her children with her that they might learn young to sympathize with those less fortunate than themselves.

"The queen," says Madame Campan, "wishing to implant in the mind of Madame, her daughter, not only the desire to help the needy, but the qualities necessary for carrying out well this sacred duty, incessantly brought to her mind, although she was still very young, the sufferings the poor had to endure during this cruel season. The princess had already a sum of 8,000 to 10,000 francs for her charities, and the queen made her distribute a part of it herself.

"Wishing to give her children a further lesson in doing good, she ordered me on New Year's Eve, as in other years, to send to Paris for all the latest toys and to have them spread out in her room. Then, taking her children by the hand, she showed them all the dolls and the mechanical contrivances that were arranged there, and told them that she had intended to give them pretty presents, but the cold made the poor so unhappy that all her money had been spent in blankets and clothes to protect them from the rigour of the season and in giving them bread, so that this year they [the children] would only have the pleasure of seeing all these novelties. Having gone back to her own room with her children, she said there was, however, one indispensable outlay to be made, for, since many mothers would think as she did this year, the toy-maker would lose by it; and so she gave him fifty louis to compensate him for his travelling expenses and for having sold nothing."

Whilst Marie Antoinette made these pathetic efforts to relieve distress, how could she know that farmer-generals were still grinding down the peasants, and that incapable politicians playing at reforms were

fermenting the great wave of discontent of which she was to be the victim? Shut in behind the gilded barriers of the Château, surrounded by smooth-tongued courtiers who told her of no grim facts existing in the world outside, how could she guess that in this pleasant land of France there were crying grievances other than famine that urgently demanded remedying? Gentle, kindly, unimaginative, Marie Antoinette lived as perhaps the sanest men and women live—in the present moment, which every one around her conspired to make as pleasant as possible.

When the spring came and the misery of the people had abated, the queen was once more at the Petit Trianon, watching the progress of the "Hameau" which had been begun the year before. For at last the idea that had originated with the Chevalier de Boufflers' romance of "Aline" had materialized, and the little village of which Madame de Pompadour had dreamed in vain was springing into life.

Boufflers, we know, was at the Court this year, and it is possible he helped the queen with the reconstruction of the scene he had described in the famous story, for there, just as we find them in "Aline," is the little farm to which the milkmaid carried her pail of milk, here is the shady meadow where she met her lover, and there the little rustic bridge on which he first caught a glimpse of her in her short white petticoat as she passed over.

Still it stands to-day, the pathetic "Hameau," with its crumbling mill and its empty dovecot, the most touching relic of the woman whose fatal error was to prefer simplicity to splendour. Did it cost the fabulous sums computed by malcontents of the day? Certainly far less than many a member of the great American democracy spends on the gratification of some whim or than our Government to-day spends gaily on County Council buildings; yet the nation that had endured with hardly a murmur the gigantic outlay involved by le

Roi Soleil in the building of Versailles and the vast sums squandered by Louis le Bien Aimé on his mistresses, was filled with indignation at the queen's innocent fancy for pastoral life. But of this she as yet knew nothing that happy spring of 1784.

Marie Antoinette was devoted to Madame de Sabran, and, having heard this winter of her children's success on the stage at Bel Œil expressed a wish to see them act. Accordingly, in April, the Duchesse de Polignac invited Madame de Sabran to bring them to Versailles to play before the queen.

Delphine at this time was fourteen, and (Madame d'Abrantès tells us) "as beautiful as an angel—one of those exquisite creatures that God gives to the world in a moment of munificence"—Elzéar was eleven, a strange, precocious little boy, whose talents and ready wit charmed and amused Marie Antoinette. A stage had been constructed in the apartments of Madame de Polignac and the play given was "Iphigenia in Tauris." Delphine and Elzéar took the leading parts of Iphigenia and Orestes, whilst the other rôles were filled by the young de Polignacs and the daughters of Madame d'Andlau.

Madame de Sabran, though at this moment worried by a fresh outburst of temper on the part of the Chevalier, writes to tell him of the event:

"If I were still capable of feeling any pleasure I should have felt a great deal last Saturday at the success of my poor little children at the Court. The king and queen showed them every kindness; the queen was touched to tears, and the king was as happy as a king at the play. Everything went off as I had wished, and with no other spectators but the royal family and the very intimate circle of the Duchesse de Polignac, according to my request."

Madame de Sabran is too modest to enlarge on the attention shown to Delphine and Elzéar by the king and

THE HAMEAU.

(From a photograph by the Author.)

queen ; but the Duchesse d'Abrantès tells us they were so enchanted with the children that at supper, after the play, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette waited on them themselves, standing one behind Orestes, the other behind Iphigenia.

Elzéar had a further success on the stage at his mother's house. The occasion was a fête given by Madame de Sabran to Prince Henry of Prussia and the Duchesse d'Orléans, and the Chevalier de Boufflers had adapted scenes from the " Bourgeois Gentilhomme " in which Elzéar appeared. The prince was enchanted, and became one of Madame de Sabran's most impassioned admirers, but embarrassed her extremely by having an engraving made from her picture by Madame le Brun, and giving away copies right and left—a form of advertisement she was far from appreciating. It is difficult to understand the attraction Prince Henry held for the Chevalier or Madame de Sabran, who were neither of them prone to like people on account of their rank. The prince, from all contemporary accounts, was an almost grotesque little man. At the first glance his ugliness was absolutely frightening; he squinted horribly, and rolled his r's in the most alarming way. Like certain of the Hohenzollerns of to-day, he had an exaggerated opinion of his own talents ; he believed that he could act, recite, and play the violin as well as any virtuoso ; but nothing was more lamentable than his performances. Madame de la Tour du Pin gives an amusing description of an evening at Madame de Montesson's when Prince Henry took part in an impromptu performance of " Zaïre," in which he played the part of the Sultan, declaiming the verses in the most appalling German accent and finally stabbing himself to the heart with a paper-knife on the sofa. Still, as she admits, he was a kind little man, and it was no doubt this kindliness, as well as his affection for Elzéar, that endeared him to Madame de Sabran.

This same year, at Versailles, another theatrical per-

formance took place that was destined to have further-reaching consequences—"Le Mariage de Figaro," for which the king had at last reluctantly withdrawn his prohibition. Louis XVI, for all his slowness of wit, had moments of rare insight, and, just as he had foreseen the folly of provoking war with England in 1778, he realized the danger of presenting "Figaro" to the public. Of what avail to sow more seeds of distrust in the minds of the populace with regard to the aristocracy of which they were ready to believe any infamy, however absurd?

The "Liaisons dangereuses" of Laclos, which Tilly calls "one of those disastrous meteors that had appeared in an angry sky," had already inflamed the minds of the *bourgeoisie* against the class they hated, and there were not wanting other writers to seize the opportunity of winning popularity. One had only to "portray a man of the Court as always vile in every circumstance of life, and a plebeian as always sublime,"[1] in order to be hailed as a literary genius.

The "Mariage de Figaro" arrived at the psychological moment; the minds of the public had been prepared for the diatribes against the aristocracy by the teachings of Rousseau and the Encyclopédistes. The Baronne d'Oberkirch, who was present at the play, marvelled at the folly of the Court in encouraging such a performance:

"These *grands seigneurs*, applauding 'Figaro,' gave themselves a slap in the face, laughed at their own expense, and, what was worse, they made others laugh. They will repent of it later! . . . Beaumarchais presented them with their own caricature, and they answered: 'That is it. We are just like that!' What strange blindness is this!"

Yet it is easy, at this distance of time, to understand their point of view. To these men and women of the Court words were only words · they did not pause to

[1] "Mémoires of Madame de Genlis."

consider that, amongst more primitive human beings in the world outside, words lead to actions. They themselves were so skilled in the art of conversation, of sliding over dangerous places, of passing agreeably from one topic to another, of turning off lightly a point that threatened to become disagreeable, that they failed to take into account the amazing lack of all sense of humour which causes the middle-class mind to dwell on a vexed question, to brood over an injustice once it has been put into words.

"Voilà du Nouveau!" the cry of the pamphlet-sellers and the news-vendors in the streets of Paris, had become the watchword of the day; anything surprising, new, and strange was welcomed by these minds wherein a sane activity had given way to restlessness, to the condition described by the untranslatable word *vertige*. Carried away by their passion for novelty, these people took the new subversive theories in their hands and passed them smilingly from one to another, as children might play with unexploded shells upon a battle-field. How should they know that, in less skilled hands than theirs, these theories would burst into flame and wrap their world in a vast conflagration?

Yet it was not alone the love of novelty that provoked enthusiasm for the subversive amongst the aristocrats. Many of them felt a genuine conviction that the scheme of things was wrong which placed them in conditions so much pleasanter than those of their fellow-men.

No generous mind can be blind to the glaring inequalities of human life; the trouble is—how to do away with them. The egotist, oblivious to the miseries of his fellow-men, as long as he himself is prosperous, declares that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds; the visionary declares that all is wrong and must be immediately put right; but the practical philosopher, whilst recognizing the wrongness of existing

conditions, realizes the difficulties that human nature itself places in the way of equality, the immense time necessary to bring about lasting reforms, and the importance of preserving valuable traditions whilst destroying old abuses.

Unfortunately, in the eighteenth century few people were practical—they could only talk. They talked continually, no longer so harmoniously as in the past; the art of conversation was beginning to give way to the clamour of debate. They talked everywhere—under the trees of the Palais-Royal, at dinner, and at supper, with eager ears listening to every word—the ears of the servants whose presence they habitually ignored.

The danger of these listening servants was a very real one. In those days the men and women of the people had no socialistic newspapers to spread discontent amongst them, the seditious pamphlets circulated in the back streets many were unable to read, but every one had an uncle who was *maître d'hôtel* to a duke, or a sister who was maid to a marquise, and it was through these channels that the democratic ideas of the nobility percolated. "We are all great libertines!" Monsieur le Marquis would remark with a sigh, as he helped himself to a peach and the lacquey who handed him the dish would carry home the saying to his family circle: "They are all libertines—they say so themselves!" Why should one have to work for one's living or to walk in the mud when Madame la Duchesse herself declared that all men were equal? Had not all these *grandes dames* and *grands seigneurs* laughed approvingly at the lady's-maid's satire on their idleness in "Figaro": "Est-ce que les femmes de mon état ont des vapeurs donc? C'est un mal de condition qu'on ne prend que dans les boudoirs."

The author of "Figaro" himself was far from foreseeing the disastrous consequences of his play. Beaumarchais had no intention of destroying the monarchy,

his aim was to create a sensation. Like his counterpart in drama to-day, he had no belief in human nature, or in anything else; he had nothing to give the world in the place of the conditions on which he expended his satire, no ideals to put before the people at whom his jests were levelled. He wanted to attract attention, and that was all.

After the "Mariage de Figaro" came a fresh sensation—the invention of ballooning. Again "voilà du nouveau!" When in June of this year two intrepid aeronauts were summoned to Versailles to make an ascent from the terrace of the Château the scene was indescribable. At a sign from the queen, seated in a tribune, the ropes were cut and the huge machine rose slowly into the air, and at this amazing sight men danced with excitement, women fainted, the spectators fell on each other's necks and wept with emotion. The conquest of the air! The dream that from the earliest ages had haunted the mind of man as he watched the birds winging their way through space. At last the great secret had been discovered; a new era had dawned for the human race.

What need of ships to cross "the formidable barrier" that separated one from England? "Balloons will carry us across the Pas de Calais! Balloons will take us to America—waft us up above the clouds; we can take journeys to the moon!"

Yet the air was still very far from being conquered! At the outset it had proclaimed itself still capable of formidable resistance, for two of the first aeronauts fell to earth and were killed; but nothing deterred others from making further attempts. The Comte d'Artois, always eager for adventure, sprang into the car of the next balloon sent up at Versailles. The Chevalier de Boufflers, who, as Madame de Sabran once remarked, had discovered the secret of perpetual motion, was not slow to follow his example.

Madame de Sabran, distraught at hearing that

Boufflers had taken to flying, wrote imploring him to desist from this new adventure:

"Think of me if you can; love me if you will; but, above all, go no more to the Moulin de Javelle. I cannot think of it without terror since the adventure of the first aeronaut—one might well have said of him, 'Qu'allait-il faire dans cette galère?' What a chance you gave to your instability! I beg you not to attempt another such adventure, and to confide all that I care for to the wings of the wind. I have only just confidence enough for the element we are in now, so give nothing over to chance. Farewell, my friend; farewell, my lover; I love you as if I were only fifteen, and the world was in the Golden Age, which makes it so difficult to live with you who belong rather too much to the Iron Age."

Still another line of discovery was agitating the minds of men and women. The occult had seized on their imaginations; on all sides seers arose who could foretell the future, penetrate into the realms of the unknown. In the Faubourg-Saint-Marceau alchemists were hard at work making gold and mercury, mixing powders that restored youth to the octogenarian, or revived the affections of the faithless lover. Sorcerers, somnambulists, Théosophes, Martinistes made large fortunes out of their disciples. Hynoptism, that under Mesmer had proved a valuable scientific discovery, passed into the hands of charlatans who used it to throw their patients into trances and convulsions.

Even the Chevalier de Boufflers fell under the spell of one of these adepts, Saint Martin, author of a book called "Des Erreurs et de la Verité," and now wrote to tell Madame de Sabran of the new truths revealed to him.

"I am not as overjoyed as you at the discovery of 'the truth,' for I am afraid of its doing me an injury. All these people will make your head whirl, and, by way of leading you to happiness, will destroy ours. It

will be like Adam and Eve in the earthly paradise after the knowledge of good and evil. It is well with us now; let us be content with that; what more do we want? If they will show us a way of prolonging our lives on condition we should never part—I agree to it; otherwise, I have no use for a science which will do no good to our love, but on the contrary may injure it. My child, errors and illusions are the lot of man; remember that you yourself once vindicated them—they are the flowers that cover precipices, and that one must beware of rooting up. Why desire to know all the miseries of our condition? Far better, on the contrary, to turn one's eyes away from disagreeable sights and fix them only on things pleasant. The author of 'Des Erreurs et de la Verité' is certainly not as clever as you, and I cannot see why God, the angels, and the devils should have chosen him out to tell him their secrets. He cannot be on more intimate terms with them than you are, being made of matter, and a matter probably not as fine as yours. All that, my child, brings your wise men nearer to madness than to divinity, and to lunatic asylums than to heaven. Still, as you must have no secrets from me, I will listen to you with pleasure when you have learnt enough to initiate me into your mysteries."

Yet, in spite of Madame de Sabran's incredulity on the subject of Boufflers' *adepte*, she was by no means proof herself against the fascination of the supernatural. Several passages in her letters show that she had a power of insight that was nothing less than clairvoyance, and she habitually consulted the cards for guidance in her affairs. In an amusing letter she wrote to Boufflers three years later, she describes a visit she paid to a sorceress which may be quoted here in context with the craze for magic that had taken hold of Paris:

"*January* 21, 1787.

"Tormented by my fate, both present and future,

and not knowing whom to turn to for counsel, I went this morning to a sorceress, the favourite of Lucifer and the best informed of his designs. From the first cards she told me I was well loved. Did she speak the truth, or are you, like dreams, that go by contraries? I thought I should have been poisoned by the odour of her attic; nothing could have been more in keeping —except her face—with her rôle of sorceress; both one and the other are black as hell. On going into this poor creature's, I was struck by plaintive accents that sounded like those of some one at the point of death. I trembled as I asked her who it was. 'Oh, that is nothing,' she said; 'it is only my husband who is dying. He has been in this state for days, and there is no end to it.' The cold-bloodedness of the woman filled me with horror, and if I had dared I would have fled on the spot; but her door was already closed and there was no going back. 'What?' I said to her, 'are you not more distressed than that? Does it not make you suffer? It hurts me to hear him, even though I do not know him!' 'Bah!' she answers, smiling and shrugging her shoulders, 'I never could endure him.' I had not the courage to pursue the topic any further, or to ask her more questions for fear of making her angry, and I sat down sadly before the table, very much troubled at finding myself in such bad company.

"But the great interest I felt soon absorbed me and chased away my scruples—she had no sooner told me that you loved me, that you would make a large fortune, that you would be my husband, and that we should have a lovely child, than she appeared to me a divinity! I was with Madame de Jarnac, who was waiting meanwhile in the next room. She had her turn next, and apparently in all she [the sorceress] tells she sees the necessity of having recourse to the resources of her art, for she sold her a powder which will inspire love in the most indifferent. In spite of all her assurances on your account, I could not resist the temptation of buying some, and I shall throw it in your eyes when I see you no longer blindfolded by Love—for a lover must never see too clearly. Meanwhile, I will make a few experiments by way of amusement on

the men I meet—who knows? it might provide a few moments of distraction? Nothing is impossible to the powers of darkness, and with their aid I may inspire some *grande passion*, which you will hear talked of with surprise, but which will certainly not divert me from the greatest of all—against that Heaven and Hell might conspire in vain. But I am forgetting to tell you that this great sorceress told me, amongst other things, that I shall live to be eighty-nine. I care little for this assurance, unless it is ordained that you shall live to be a hundred, for the earth could more easily do without the sun that makes it live than I could do without you."

Madame de Sabran does not say whether she ever visited the High-priest of the cult of magic, of whom many women of her world—the Duchesse de Polignac amongst them—sought counsel; but her letters contain many details on the past history of this extraordinary man, which as far as we can discover are all incorrect. Joseph Balsamo, who now called himself Cagliostro, was in reality the son of a Sicilian Jew, but the stories he told Paris of his origin were of the most extraordinary description. He was 300 years old, yet he had a servant who had been with him 1,500 years, presumably through succeeding incarnations; he had travelled in Egypt, in a country inhabited by gigantic animals; he had correspondents in a town of Central Africa ten times as large as Paris. Cagliostro was not only a seer, but an alchemist; every month he shut himself up in his laboratory to manufacture the ingot of gold with which he paid his debts; the diamonds that blazed on his fingers, in his cravat, his waistcoat, and his shoe buckles were also of his own creating. It is hardly surprising that the idle women of society, magnetized by his brilliant eyes " that pierced like gimlets " and his sonorous metallic voice, and fascinated by the weird garments he wore and the air of mystery he threw around him, should hang upon his lips. Even the Baronne d'Oberkirch, who never fell under his influence,

could not deny that he had some mysterious fascination. "What I cannot deny is that Cagliostro had some demoniacal power; that he fascinated the mind, that he quelled reflection. I do not undertake to explain this phenomenon; I only recount it, leaving to others more learned than myself the task of elucidating the mystery."

Was there something satanic in the power of Cagliostro, something more potent than the *bizarreries* which attracted silly women that cast a spell over the mind of the Cardinal de Rohan and lured him on to his own destruction and that of the woman he adored? It is certain that intercourse with what we call "the spirit world" has often led to disaster both in the case of individuals and of classes. Mysticism and table-turning were the rage in Berlin before the present war, in which we see a stolid and reflective nation turned into a race of criminal lunatics; is it not possible that the "demoniacal possession" displayed by the Revolutionaries of 1793 may be partly accounted for by the craze for sorcery that had invaded the nation before the Revolution? It would seem that evil influences—the "elementals" of theosophy—may indeed become unchained through interference with the laws of nature that hide their presence from us, and that the powers of darkness, once loosed upon the world, may produce an era of violence and horror against which the powers of light are temporarily unable to contend.

The temptation of the Cardinal de Rohan through the mediumship of Cagliostro curiously resembles the temptation of Faust by Mephistopheles; it is difficult to realize, when we read the extraordinary story, that this is history, and history of only one hundred and thirty years ago, rather than the invention of some medieval romancer.

Cagliostro, in his gold-embroidered coat and scarlet waistcoat, flashing with diamonds, standing before his

black-covered table on which was placed the magic globe of crystal; Cagliostro, in his strange jargon of French, Italian, and Arabic talking of the stars, of angels and of devils, of Memphis, giants, and the *grand arcane*, succeeded in transporting de Rohan into an enchanted world.

Under the influence of Cagliostro's incantations the Cardinal saw his fondest hopes realized; he saw himself received into favour by the woman he had long adored hopelessly from afar—the queen who had steadfastly refused to receive him at her Court, but who in return for the diamond necklace would condescend to smile on him at last.

What but a mind muddled with magic could entertain so crazy a scheme? That Marie Antoinette, with all her circle of courtiers willing to do her bidding, should choose the man she had most disliked and distrusted to aid her in a compromising undertaking was an idea so preposterous that no normal mind could have entertained it for a moment. It can only be explained by the fact that at this time the mind of the Cardinal was not normal, and the wild extravagances of Cagliostro had so unbalanced his judgment that nothing seemed to him too impossible to happen. So, in response to Madame de la Motte's persuasions, and supported by Cagliostro's assurances that his enterprise was to be crowned with success, the Cardinal de Rohan allowed himself to be led along the fatal path, and the great " Affaire du Collier " began.

The story of this amazing intrigue is too well known to be repeated here; but, since it occupies so large a place in the letters of Madame de Sabran, it is interesting to notice how it coincided with her own history. Now it was precisely at the moment that Madame de Sabran and her children were staying at the Court, in April 1784, that Madame de la Motte first began to tell the Cardinal of her intimacy with the queen. All through that spring and summer, whilst Marie Antoinette was

innocently amusing herself with Elzéar and Delphine, whilst she watched the progress of the "Hameau" and presided over the launching of the balloons on the terrace of the Château, the infamous La Motte was vainly endeavouring to attract her attention, lurking in the Orangerie beneath her windows, placing herself in front of the crowd in the Galerie des Glaces as the queen passed through, and simulating a fainting fit at the psychological moment. When all these manœuvres failed—for Marie Antoinette never once noticed her existence—the adventuress, nothing daunted, returned to tell the Cardinal of her successes. In April little blue-bordered notes began to arrive from the queen for her "cousin," Jeanne de la Motte Valois; by May letters, this time edged with gold, were addressed to the Cardinal himself. Then came the fateful "Scène du Bosquet," when the spurious Marie Antoinette, in a gown and cloak of gauzy white copied exactly from the queen's, glided through the darkness of a starless August night and dropped a rose at the feet of the Cardinal. Meanwhile, the real Marie Antoinette remained in her rooms in the great Château serenely unconscious of the hideous plot that was at work for her destruction; little dreaming, that summer night, that the first act of the greatest tragedy the world has ever seen, the tragedy in which she was to play the leading part, was being played out so close at hand.

With the "Affaire du Collier" the curtain went up on the Revolution. Henceforth there was to be no peace for the unhappy queen, for although it was not until the following year that the facts of this abominable intrigue were to be revealed to her, she knew already that the tongue of calumny was at work. How infamous were the libels circulated in the underworld of Paris she could not of course guess, for they were too foul to reach her ears; but that malicious things were said she was already well aware. What did they find to say against her? With all the innocence of a

woman who has nothing more than harmless follies on her conscience, she wondered what these charges could be, and one day, in the spring of this year, when the Chevalier de Boufflers was at the Court, she turned towards him gaily and remarked :

" Monsieur le Chevalier, tell me in verse what are the faults with which people reproach me ! "

Boufflers, thus appealed to, showed that if he was no courtier it was not for want of tact or ready wit. With chivalrous courtesy, but with an honesty of which few men at the Court would have been capable, he told the queen that people called her foolish, unreliable, vain, and selfish, yet by clever turns of phrase contrived to take the sting out of each accusation in turn :

" Voulez-vous savoir les on dit
Qui courent sur Thémire ?
On dit que parfois son esprit
Paroît être en délire.
Quoi ! de bonne foi ?
Oui ; mais, croyez-moi,
Elle sait si bien faire,
Que sa déraison,
Fussiez-vous Caton,
Auroit l'art de vous plaire.

" On dit que le trop de bon sens
Jamais ne la tourmente ;
On dit même qu'un grain d'encens
La ravit et l'enchante.
Quoi ! de bonne foi ?
Oui ; mais croyez-moi,
Elle sait si bien faire,
Que même les dieux
Descendroient des cieux
Pour l'encenser sur terre.

" Vous donne-t-elle un rendez-vous
De plaisir ou d'affaire,
On dit qu'oublier l'heure et vous,
Pour elle c'est misère.
Quoi ! de bonne foi ?
Oui ; mais croyez-moi,
Se revoit-on près d'elle,
Adieu tous les torts.
Le temps même alors
S'enfuit à tire d'aile.

"Sans l'égoïsme rien n'est bon,
C'est là sa loi suprême:
Aussi s'aime-t-elle, dit-on,
D'une tendresse extrême;
Quoi! de bonne foi?
Oui; mais, croyez-moi,
Laissons-lui son système;
Peut-on la blâmer
De savoir aimer
Ce que tout le monde aime?"

A cleverer woman than Marie Antoinette would have taken the lesson to heart and realized that the pretty compliment at the end of each verse was only the necessary tinsel wrapping in which alone home-truths could be offered to a queen. But subtlety was not her strong point, and it is said that she was delighted with the poem and sang it herself at the Court.[1]

Had Marie Antoinette numbered amongst her intimates more men like Boufflers, more women like Madame de Sabran all might have been well with her. Her worst foes were those of her own household—the treacherous Orléans, the King's dull, spiteful old aunts, the Comte de Provence—hostile because her son, and no longer he himself, was heir to the throne of France—her brother, the Emperor Joseph, who had allowed his condemnation of her early follies to become known to the public, the Comte de Besenval, and the vain Duc de Lauzun, whose advances she had repulsed, and Maurepas, who owed her his dismissal. The friends she had chosen—the Princesse de Lamballe and the Duchesse de Polignac—were women of no character; the two men, Fersen and the Duc de Coigny—to whom she showed favour, were powerless to defend her against a world of enemies. Her very virtue laid her open to attack—had she been the "Messalina" described by the revolutionaries she would have gained powerful supporters, for a bad woman seldom lacks allies. The men whose vanity she had wounded were amongst her bitterest

[1] This incident is recorded in the "Mémoires secrets," March 29, 1784.

enemies. "The good royalist society," said the Prince de Ligne, "made the Republic without knowing it."

Of all the Court, the Prince de Ligne was perhaps her most sincere friend. There was never any question of love between them, and, as he looked at the tragedy gathering around the woman he admired and pitied so profoundly, he was able to bring an impartial judgment to bear on the situation. "These extremities," he wrote, "would never have been reached but for the too great kindness of the king and the indulgence of the queen, who allowed little women, annoyed at not having looked as beautiful as she did at her charming balls last winter, to go and chatter on their return about her extravagance and the disorder of the finances."

So gradually the ferment grew, and through that summer of 1784 the pamphlet-sellers made their way through the streets of Paris hawking their calumnies to an eager public with the cry, "Voilà du Nouveau!"

Little did they dream, some of the people who bought this garbage, that the day was coming when the newsvendors would be crying in their midst: "Voilà du Nouveau! Liste des gagnants à la loterie de la très Sainte Guillotine," and that their own names would be found in that dread category. They wanted, like the Athenians, some new thing. New and horrible things awaited them.

CHAPTER VII

TEARS, IDLE TEARS!

DELPHINE and Elzéar had now become the youthful prodigies of Paris; every one talked of their wit and talents, and Madame de Sabran was filled with delight at the success of her plan of education. For some years Elzéar had been under the care of a tutor, the Abbé Bernard, a reserved and pious man whom Madame de Sabran trusted implicitly and treated with the greatest kindness, even settling a pension on him, to be paid when Elzéar's education was finished. Delphine, so far, had been taught with her brother, but now the time had come when, according to the custom of the day, she must go into a convent for a few months to be prepared for entering the world. "I see with mortal grief the moment approaching when I must put my Delphine into the convent," Madame de Sabran writes to Boufflers. "The day settled is next Saturday; I went there to-day for the first time. . . . I do not know what I shall do the day I have to leave her there."

Ever since their birth Madame de Sabran had devoted herself to her children, and Boufflers, with whom she talked over everything relating to them, loved them as if they were his own—"il n'y manque que la façon!" he was wont to say.

Madame de Sabran went a great deal into the world at this period. The house at which she was seen most frequently was that of the old Duc de Nivernais,

whom we met before in his *salon* in the Rue de Tournon. The duchess being now dead, the duke lived almost entirely at Saint-Ouen, just outside Paris.

Nothing more enchanting than this country-house of the Duc de Nivernais can be imagined. It stood on the banks of the Seine, and from the magnificent terrace distant views could be seen through vistas cut in the surrounding trees; smooth lawns rolled down to the river's edge, on which there browsed white sheep from Lorraine, a present from the Chevalier de Boufflers, who seems to have entertained a peculiar affection for these unresponsive animals. Birds were, however, the particular passion of the duke, and he loved them so much that he could not bear to shut them up in cages, so he hit upon an original device for keeping them near him. Close to the château was a little wood through which a stream wandered, and over the whole of this the duke had almost invisible wire netting stretched, covering the tree-tops and so transforming the wood into an immense aviary. Clumps of flowers were then planted amongst the undergrowth, the duke's writing-table and book-case were arranged at the foot of a tree in the middle, and lastly, quantities of birds were turned loose inside the netting. Here the dear old man sat peacefully at work every morning, composing verses or translating Latin poets, whilst the stream murmured at his side, the flowers gave forth delicious scents, and countless happy warblers flew around his head and perched in the branches above him.

The Chevalier de Boufflers and his mother were constantly at this peaceful Eden, and as soon as they arrived an outbreak of versifying took place; every one started writing sonnets and *bouts-rimés* vying with each other as to who should invent the neatest. Madame de Boufflers usually carried off the prize, at seventy-two her spirits were as buoyant as ever, and one little verse composed by her at Saint-Ouen shows

that at heart she had not yet passed the age of gallantries:

"Dimanche, je fus aimable;
Lundi, je fus autrement;
Mardi, je pris l'air capable;
Mercredi, je fis l'enfant;
Jeudi, je fus raisonnable;
Vendredi, j'eus un amant;
Samedi, je fus coupable;
Dimanche, il fut inconstant."

But even here the Chevalier was not free from fits of temper. One evening a discussion arose between the Chevalier de Boufflers, Madame de Boufflers, her brother, the Prince de Beauvau, and Madame de Rochefort on the subject of style in letter-writing.

"The discussion was interrupted several times by shouts from the Chevalier de Boufflers, who could not endure contradiction, and who flew into a temper like a fine devil, to such a point that he left the room banging the doors violently behind him, but he reappeared the moment after, laughing himself at his outburst."[1]

The duke, who was devoted to Boufflers in spite of his faults, took the greatest interest in his career; as we have seen already, he had advised him how to tide over a financial crisis, and now that in 1785 another crisis of the same kind again threatened, it was no doubt owing to the influence of the Duc de Nivernais that Boufflers decided to embark on an enterprise that cost Madame de Sabran many bitter tears. Seven years earlier the Duc de Lauzun had succeeded in wresting Senegal from England—a feat that, according to Madame du Deffand, was not particularly brilliant since "the garrison, when attacked by his ships, consisted of four men, of which three were sick." The governorship of the new colony was now vacant, and Boufflers, at his wits' end to escape his creditors, and fired, as ever, with the hope of distinguishing himself,

[1] "Le duc de Nivernais," by Lucien Perey.

insisted on applying for the post. Through the intervention of Calonne he succeeded in securing it on a salary of 24,000 francs, and also a two years' advance of his pay. By this time the king had evidently forgiven him his irreverent verses, for, on being asked to sign the order, he wrote at the foot of it the one word "Bon."

Madame de Sabran was in despair at Boufflers' decision, yet, even from her point of view, it was probably the best thing he could do.

As long as he remained in France it was quite impossible for him to keep away from her, and at this moment more circumspection than usual was necessary, for Delphine was growing up and would soon be back from the convent, and, as the Chevalier pointed out, they would then be obliged to see each other less, and to be more careful when they were together. Madame de Sabran could not fail to see the force of his reasonings, but was heartbroken at the idea of his leaving her. If he *must* go, why should she not go with him—as his wife? But on this point, as before, Boufflers was inexorable. That day had not yet come, he must win distinction first; he could not come to her empty-handed. Yet that he longed to marry her is evident from his letters; the thought of their marriage recurs in them perpetually as the great desire of his heart. "It is the only one of all my enterprises that really interests me." "Yes, *mon enfant*, I love to swear it to you every day, and a thousand times a day—in my innermost thoughts you are my wife." Henceforth it is by this name he most often calls her.

On November 22, 1785, Boufflers left her, and from Rochefort he wrote her this delightful letter:

"I cannot think of our parting, my wife, without a shudder. I felt that all was over, all was lost, and that I was falling into a bottomless abyss whence I could

find no outlet. . . . I accused myself of mad and cruel ambition, I saw myself only as your tyrant and your torturer. But the thing is done; I shall not change my destiny and yours, but only make it seem more dreadful by cursing it perpetually. It is better to follow it with resignation, and above all with the hope that after long trial Fate will give me back to you, will give you back to me, and that, in reuniting us, she will renounce her power to part us. Await no more complainings or regrets from me. Your heart has no need to be softened, or mine to be discouraged; on the contrary, I want to set you an example of strength. If ever I believed in a Being that guides others it is at this moment, for it is He who has done all. He will do the rest. If He exists, if He observes, if He cares for this animated dust, if He reads in hearts, if the noblest souls are the most pleasing to Him, He will not leave you in your tears, He will not tear you for ever from the one who loves you, from the one you love. He will make him more worthy of you, and perhaps when you see your lover again you will be proud to be his, you will love him in the sight of Heaven and of earth, and you will make a triumph of a love of which you made a mystery.

"There, my child, are consoling thoughts; perhaps they will seem to you vain, but they spring from my love rather than from my vanity. My glory—if ever I acquire any—will be my dowry, and your adornment; it is this that makes me cling to it. If I were handsome, if I were young, if I were rich, if I could offer you all that makes women happy in their own eyes and in those of others, we should long ago have borne the same name and shared the same fortunes. I need but a little honour and importance for my age and poverty to be forgotten, and for me to appear finer in the eyes of all who see us, just as your love makes me finer in your eyes. . . . Good-bye, love; good-bye, thou, for thou art fairer and more dear than love itself."

The Chevalier wrote again several times before he sailed, for he was obliged to wait several weeks for a favouring wind. All the while his thoughts were with the woman he loved, and his letters show how tenderly

he sympathized with all her troubles, how he lived in her life almost more than in his own.

" In the midst of inaction and the suppression of all my strong emotions, I love to turn my thoughts towards that house which is so dear to me ; to see you amidst all your occupations and diversions, writing, painting, reading, sleeping, arranging, and disarranging everything, disentangling great affairs, worrying over small ones, spoiling your children, spoilt by your friends, and always different, yet always the same ; above all, the same towards your poor old husband who loves you so much, who loves you so well, and who will love you as long as he has a heart."

(J'aime, au milieu de mon inaction et de l'assoupissement de toutes mes passions violentes, à tourner mes pensées vers cette maison si chère, à t'y voir au milieu de tes occupations et de tes délassements, écrivant, peignant, lisant, dormant, rangeant et dérangeant tout, te démêlant des grandes affaires, t'inquiétant des petites, gâtant tes enfants, gâtée par tes amis, et toujours différente, et toujours la même, et surtout toujours la même pour ce pauvre vieux mari qui t'aime tant, qui t'aime si bien, qui t'aimera aussi longtemps qu'il aura un cœur.)

In another letter he sends the locks of hair she had asked for—those locks over which she shed so many tears and wore always in a golden heart round her neck.

" I send you, dear wife, the locks of hair you asked for as a pledge and symbol of the sweetest and most lasting of ties. . . . As I had people all around me during my toilet, I had them put aside in the name of my sister, lest in saying no name yours might have been guessed. Here they are, *ma fille* ; they are yours, but less yours than those left to me. I shall bring them back to you a little whiter, but you will not despise them ; sometimes they will mingle with your lovely fair tresses, and my head will deck itself with your hair as a withered tree decks itself with ivy and with vine. What matters it to be young or old, if only I can live

with you, that I can see you at my leisure and that in dying I can hold your hand?"

(Je te les envoie, chère femme, ces cheveux que tu m'as demandés comme un gage et un symbole du plus doux et du plus durable des liens. . . . Comme j'avais du monde autour de moi pendant ma toilette, je les ai faits garder sous le nom de ma sœur, de peur qu'en ne disant pas de nom, je ne fisse soupçonner le tien. Les voilà, ma fille, ils sont à toi, mais moins encore que ce qui m'en reste. Je te les rapporterai un peu blanchis, mais tu ne les dédaigneras pas; ils se mêleront quelquefois à tes belles tresses blondes, et ma tête se parera de tes cheveux comme un arbre desséché se pare de lierre et de pampre. Que m'importe d'être jeune ou vieux, pourvu que je vive avec toi, que je te voie à mon aise et que *te teneam moriens deficiente manu?*)

At last the wind blew that must take him from her across the ocean, and in both the letters he wrote her at this moment we see how deeply the belief in reincarnation had entered his mind—that great hope of a Hereafter which comes to all who love and who long to know that, in the words of Buddhist lovers, their love will last "for the space of many lives."

"Here are the favouring breezes, *ma bonne enfant.* I thank them because departure means return as all contraries bring their contraries. This is the way of nature physically and morally; we are born to die, and I think and believe, especially at this moment, that we die to be born again. . . . My heart is comforted at the thought that your charming little saint [1] is in your house. That house is a paradise in every sense of the word, and I am exiled from it, not in truth on account of my crimes but because of the crime of men who have given the empire of the world over to ambition, instead of only acknowledging love and happiness. Kiss your charming children from me. My heart bleeds at the thought that I can no longer hold them in my arms and make them understand what it is in my eyes to be born of you. . . ."

[1] Delphine, who had just returned from the convent

" The wind keeps up, and is in fact growing stronger, but the barometer is going down, and predicts contrary gales; let us profit by what we have without too much anxiety at losing it, without too much confidence of retaining it. It is the wind of which I speak, *ma fille*, and not of you, whom I know I shall only lose in dying; and even then I cling to the idea of another existence to add to the duration of our love, for I feel that its volume is too great for the limits of a life. . . . Farewell, my wife; I love to imagine the pleasure of that leave I am to be given before the end of the year. With what joy and eagerness I shall prepare for the journey! With what impatience I shall cross the seas! Once on land how I shall fly to you! . . . so much happiness deserves to be bought with some suffering. The marriage of Hercules was only accomplished after his twelve labours. Good-bye; I love you like a father, like a child, and like a madman. Good-bye."

(Le vent se soutient, et même il se renforce; mais les baromètres baissent et nous annoncent des coups de vents contraires; profitons de ce que nous avons, sans trop d'inquiétude de le perdre, sans trop de confiance de le garder. C'est du vent que je parle, ma fille, et non pas de toi, que je sais bien que je ne perdrai qu'en mourant; encore ne puis-je point me détacher de l'idée d'une autre existence pour l'ajouter à la durée de notre amour; car je sens que la dose est trop forte pour les bornes de la vie. . . . Adieu, ma femme; j'aime à me représenter le plaisir que me fera ce congé, que je dois recevoir avant la fin de l'année. Avec quelle joie, avec quelle ardeur je ferai les préparatifs du voyage! avec quelle impatience je franchirai les mers! une fois à terre, comme je volerai vers toi! . . . tant de bonheur mérite bien d'être acheté par quelque peine. . . . Le mariage d'Hercule ne s'est fait qu'après ses douze travaux. Adieu. Je t'aime comme un père, comme un enfant, et comme un fou. . . . Adieu.)

But now we come to the extraordinary part of the Chevalier's behaviour. Having written these impas-

sioned letters to Madame de Sabran, he sailed away to Senegal, and—as far as we can discover—never sent her another word for months. One can imagine the despair of the unhappy woman unable to speak to anyone around her of her feelings, obliged to hide her sufferings from the world. At moments the effort of going about and appearing gay with this gnawing anxiety always at her heart was almost more than she could bear. Only in her journal to the Chevalier could she confide the daily, almost hourly, misery she endured.

"When one is condemned to live far away from what one loves the only pleasure is to think of it, but never shall I have that satisfaction; on the contrary, I must . . . talk when I long to be silent, and laugh when I long to weep. . . . Sometimes this task is beyond my strength, and then my senses, worn out with constraint, fail me all at once and I fall into a depression that is like a lethargy—I can hardly understand what is said to me or think of a reply. Only fright at finding myself in this state takes me out of it, and then I make a superhuman effort. I drive you from my thoughts as far as possible, or rather, I look beyond the space of time that separates us and think only of the moment when I shall see you again, which will be for me, I believe, the only and the true resurrection. Good-bye, my husband, my lover, my friend, my universe, my soul, my God." (Adieu, mon époux, mon amant, mon ami, mon univers, mon âme, mon Dieu.)

She was a woman to whom love was everything, to whom wealth and ease and luxury, the admiration of the world, the favour of the queen, were all as dust and ashes without the man who had become, as she said, her universe. The thought of him was always with her, sleeping or waking; his absence was an agony, yet so perfect was her self-control that the world never guessed her sufferings. Every one who knew her speaks only of her gaiety, her charm, her enthralling conversation—"près d'elle," says Madame

Vigée le Brun, "on n'a jamais connu l'ennui." This was the supreme art of her day—the art of self-discipline, the art of *savoir vivre*, that, as Taine says, enabled the women of this period to go smiling to the scaffold.

So with Eléonore de Sabran. Whatever happened, she must keep up, keep up, never let the world see the anguish of her soul. Always calm and serene, she must throw herself into the gay life of Paris, must sit before the looking-glass through the dressing and powdering of her hair, deftly press the patch to her pretty cheek, array herself in silks and brocades fresh from the brain of the great Madame Bertin, wrap herself in the latest cloak from Monsieur Baulard's, and then drive away with Delphine in her gilded coach to supper with the Maréchale de Luxembourg, the Duc de Nivernais or Madame de Montesson, to laugh, to talk, to scintillate till midnight brought release. Then home again, through the dark streets to the silent house, the quiet room looking out over the sleeping garden. It was then she wrote to him, in the small hours of the morning, when she could feel herself alone with him at last :

"Every one is asleep around me, like in the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. You are sleeping, too, no doubt, but on a stormy sea surrounded by a thousand dangers, and so your wife watches with you." (Tout dort autour de moi, comme dans le palais de la Belle au bois dormant. Tu dors sans doute aussi, mais c'est sur une mer orageuse, entouré de mille dangers, et c'est pour cela que ta femme veille.)

Madame de Sabran's journal at this date is one of the most vivid records of the life of Paris during those last days of the monarchy ; it tells of her visits to the Court, of fêtes given by the Comte d'Artois, of the successes of the lovely Delphine—whom Boufflers had christened "the Queen of the Roses"—above all of

the " affair of the necklace," which was to have such far-reaching consequences.

Madame de Sabran was staying at Montreuil, the country-house of Madame Elizabeth, the King's sister, not far from the Château of Versailles, when the Cardinal's trial took place, and the news that each day reached the Court is retailed to Boufflers in detail :

" *June* 1, 1786.

" The Cardinal came out of the Bastille at six o'clock in the morning, to go to the Palais [de Justice]. His household were waiting for him at the foot of the stairs, and all his family—except the Comtesse de Rochefort-Breteuil, who sent word in the morning that she had colic—were at the door of the great chamber awaiting the judges. . . . The Cardinal was cross-examined till nine o'clock in the morning, but he was spared from standing at the bar. Every one rose when he appeared, and he seated himself, by order of these gentlemen, on the barristers' bench. All his family had left, and poor Madame de Marsan went to pray to God in Notre-Dame. The sitting ended, the Cardinal went out, very sad and very dejected, for he had just heard that the conclusions of the Procurer-General went as far as branding. He was left in the registrar's office whilst his fellow prisoners, Madame de la Motte, Vilette, Mademoiselle Oliva, etc., were cross-examined.

" *June* 2, 1786.

" The Cardinal has been unconditionally exculpated. Madame de la Motte, condemned to be whipped and branded with a rope round her neck and to be imprisoned for life in the Salpêtrière ; her fond spouse to be whipped and branded also and sent to the galleys for life ; Cagliostro discharged from all accusation ; Mademoiselle Oliva remanded ; and the wretched Vilette, who had declared himself to be Swiss in order to escape hanging, merely banished. I do not know what earned him so much pity ; he seemed to me the most culpable of all, for it was he who wrote all the signatures in the name of the queen. Except for this, the public seems fairly pleased with the verdict. We now wait for the

king to announce what is to be the fate of the Cardinal—which interests Paris madly, I don't know why. The day of his trial the whole Palace was filled, not only by the populace, but by an enormous number of distinguished people who had the courage to stay there from seven o'clock in the morning till ten in the evening. When the Cardinal came out, not white as snow, but, at any rate, cleared from accusations on the score of swindling, there were clappings and cries of 'Vive Monsieur le Cardinal!' Monsieur de Launay,[1] who was leading him in order to take him back to the Bastille, in spite of his *innocence*, was obliged to say, 'To the hotel!' simply to put the people off the scent, for they were preparing to cut his horses' reins and drag his carriage back in pomp to the Hôtel de Soubise."

Such was the justice of the people—the people who perpetually reproached the queen for her extravagance, who worked themselves up into frenzies of indignation over her supposed gallantries! Yet this man, the most extravagant and dissolute prelate of his day, who had admittedly entered into a sordid intrigue for depleting the national treasury in order to buy her a diamond necklace, who had himself aspired to become her lover, was now received with acclamations by the populace![2]

Marie Antoinette heard with a sinking heart of the acquittal of the man who had helped to ruin her; she heard with still deeper forebodings of the people's attitude towards him. She saw how gladly they would welcome any one who could cast a blot on her good name; she saw how low that name had already fallen that this "sale intrigue," as she called it, could have obtained credence amongst them. All around her she saw only smiling faces, heard only deferential phrases, yet even in her own intimate circle she knew, now, that there must be sinister influences at work.

[1] The Governor of the Bastille, murdered on July 14, 1789.

[2] The revolutionaries also took up his cause as the victim of "despotism." See "La Bastille dévoilée," vol. iii. p. 80 and following pages.

"Often my heart is filled with sadness," she wrote this year to her sister Marie Christine, "and no one here is capable of understanding or listening to my troubles. My heart was formed for the sweetness of home life and friendship; but I am the wife of a king, and you and I, my sister, have around us veiled enemies or friends who are more respectful than sincere." [1]

Who were these "veiled enemies"? Who, in all her *entourage* could she trust? Such questions arose continually in the mind of the unhappy queen. On the day of Pentecost, just three days after the acquittal of the Cardinal, as she passed through the Galerie des Glaces along the rows of obsequious courtiers, her eyes suddenly met those of a child looking at her from the crowd. It was Elzéar de Sabran—the little boy she thought so wonderful—and on the impulse of the moment, overcome by the craving for something simple, something human, something that could think no evil, she went up to him and kissed him on both his little cheeks. To the end of his life Elzéar never forgot that moment; still, as an old man, he retained a chivalrous adoration for the queen. "One must have seen Marie Antoinette," he would say, "in order to realize the charm and grace with which God had crowned her. Poor queen, she was maligned indeed!"

Elzéar was staying in the Château of Versailles at this moment with his "uncle," Monseigneur de Sabran, who was almoner to the king, and Madame de Sabran brought Delphine from Montreuil to see the procession of the "Saint-Esprit." We must leave her to describe the incident to the Chevalier:

"*June* 5.

"I was overcome yesterday with fatigue and the crowd and the heat, which is extreme; but ought I to complain to an inhabitant of Senegal? The pleasure of amusing my children sustained me in the horrible crush, for they had never seen the ceremony, and, in

[1] "Lettres de Marie Antoinette," by le Comte de Reiset.

spite of being pushed and jostled, I took them into the Gallery to see the procession, which they thought very beautiful. Elzéar is a little inhabitant of Versailles; his uncle keeps him with him for all the ' fêtes,' and he will come and dine with us every day at Montreuil. He has already had a great success at the Court. The queen saw him near her as she passed, and she kissed him on his two little rosy cheeks. This morning she said to me : ' Do you know that I kissed a gentleman yesterday ? ' ' Madame, I know it, for he boasts of it.' She began to laugh, and told me that she thought he had grown and improved amazingly, and that she had pointed him out the day before to the Archduchess at the play—to which I had taken him to see ' Didon '—as the greatest actor in the world, without excepting Mademoiselle Saint-Huberti.

" In the evening I went to supper with the Duchesse de Polignac for the first time, with my little ' nun ' [Delphine], who was dying of fright. There was a tremendous crowd; the Archduke[1] and Archduchess were there to supper, and also the queen. When I had moved away from her [Delphine] for a moment, to speak to some one, it occurred to the Archduke to come and talk to her. She was so disconcerted, not understanding what he said or knowing how to reply, that she simply fled to the other end of the room, blushing and terribly upset. M. le Comte d'Artois, seeing this, began to laugh with all his heart; he explained to the Archduke—who was surprised by her flight—that she was a very shy young girl making her first appearance in the world. He told it to the queen, and it amused her very much—the whole evening they made fun of my little savage, who did not know what to do with herself. As she was in great beauty, I was the less troubled by it; her pretty ways, her naïveté, and her youth found favour for her with the whole assembly, and with one voice they sang her praises. You can imagine the pleasure this gave to her good mother; it made me feel quite young again, and never had the world seemed so charming. Farewell, my friend; I tell you all this without any scruple, because you love the mother and the children, and one day you will be their father."

[1] The Archduke Ferdinand of Austria.

But all through these scenes the thought of the Chevalier recurred perpetually to Madame de Sabran, and she tortured herself with questions as to his long silence. For still no word came from Senegal, and at moments she began to believe he had gone out of her life for ever. Then a cold despair seized her, and every effort to be gay was unavailing. The day after the supper-party at the Polignacs she writes :

"*June 6, 1786.*

"Never have I thought of you so tenderly or so sadly as last night. We were all assembled in the salon of the Comtesse Diane—the Duchesse de Polignac, the duc, the Prince de Ligne, Monsieur le Comte d'Artois, etc., when we heard delicious music in the garden. It was the most beautiful weather in the world ; the moon shone serenely through spring thickets and was reflected in every stream of this lovely little Eden. Every one wandered about on their own account, and I on yours, for, unnoticed by the crowd, I slipped away to be alone with you undisturbed. I saw you, I talked to you, I pressed you to my heart, I remembered in all the bitterness of my soul so many evenings like this that we had spent together in Aix-la-Chapelle and elsewhere, and I could have died of regret at the thought that these delicious moments had gone for ever—yes, for ever, my child. . . . My life is ended; you ended it on November 22, 1785.[1] Your ambition ruined everything—love, hope, and happiness. Fate is now weaving a new scheme of life for me, but her hand moves so slowly that I cannot see the end. . . . I was lost in all this crowd of thoughts that might have led me anywhere, had not some one taken the trouble to come and look for me. I excused my flight as best I could, and under the cover of the night they could not see my tears."

But she sternly repressed these morbid moments, and for Delphine's sake forced herself to enter into the gaieties of the Court. Life at Montreuil was so amusing that at times her own spirits rose, and she found herself

[1] The date Boufflers parted from her before he went to Senegal.

carried away on the tide of mirth. Every evening, when no festivity summoned them to the Château, the party at Montreuil amused themselves with poetry games, which made them all shout with laughter, for the Prince de Ligne, like an irrepressible *enfant terrible*, persisted in spoiling all the prettiest verses with some *risqué* rhyme of his own. But this, Madame de Sabran naïvely remarks, did not make them less amusing!

One of the gayest of the circle was the king's youngest brother, the Comte d'Artois, who always paid a great deal of attention to Madame de Sabran and the pretty Delphine. We read of a boar-hunt at Rambouillet to which he invited them, and a few days later of a fête at Bagatelle, his little house in the Bois de Boulogne, which Madame de Sabran enjoyed enormously, until at last, wearied with gaiety, her thoughts turned again sadly to the absent Chevalier:

"*June* 17, 1786. At Montreuil.

"The Comte d'Artois gave us a charming fête yesterday at Bagatelle, an excellent dinner, a drive in the Bois de Boulogne, where he drove like the wind, proverbs played by Dugazon that made us die of laughing, and, to finish up with, illuminations like those at Trianon, which were a great success. The weather was calm, and the night as beautiful as one of your Senegal nights. There in that charming Paradise I felt myself transported to the Elysian Fields. I felt my soul gradually rise and separate itself from the wretched envelope that has made it suffer so. Looking up at the blue vault, where, striving to outshine each other, were so many worlds and suns, I seemed in my own eyes so small that I said to myself, filled with wonder and humility: 'What am I in this vast universe, and what right have I to complain when nothing happens as I wish? Who heeds the murmur of the insect trampled underfoot? And shall I flatter myself that this great changing System, the Soul of immensity, and the Father of destinies, who blindly distributes

good or evil, pains and pleasures to the whole of nature, should hear my laments and trouble about my happiness? He only knows the immutable law by which He governs and to which everything must submit. What though I shed tears because my lover leaves me? He is no more touched by it than is my lover; death is the only consolation He bestows on us, and the one of which we avoid availing ourselves as long as possible. . . . But, as a drop of water loses itself in the sea, all my troubles vanished imperceptibly into the limitless spaces where I had lost myself, and my soul, sufficient to itself, demanded with pride what mattered your going or your returning, your remembrance or your forgetting.' Then—forgive me, my friend!—for the first time I blushed for my folly; I regretted so many days spent in tears that might have been used to better purpose, and I made a firm resolution to listen in future to my reason rather than to my heart, which I mean to encase in triple armour till you return."

But when did any woman ever *reason* herself out of grieving for her lover's faithlessness? In vain Madame de Sabran summoned all her philosophy to her aid and resolved to enjoy life as if no such being as the Chevalier de Boufflers existed—she *could* not drive him from her thoughts, and the round of gaieties at Montreuil only filled her with weariness. "My head seems filled with fog and my heart with sadness. This is always the effect the great world has on me—I feel that it is not made for me nor I for it."

In vain the Comtesse Diane begged her to stay on longer; she felt she could not bear another day of it, and so, in spite of her good resolutions on the night of the Bagatelle fête, she returned to Paris with her children.

Still every night, as before, she wrote her journal to the Chevalier, telling him the events of the day—the ending of the "Affaire du Collier" with the branding of Madame de la Motte, and soon after she joyfully describes the king's visit to the fleet at Cherbourg and

his reception by the loyal sea-faring people of the north.

It was on these occasions that the king showed to the best advantage. "En Louis XVI," says Monsieur de Pontmartin, "il y avait l'embarras d'une âme supérieure à l'esprit, le chagrin de ressentir plus qu'on ne sait exprimer." But if, amongst courtiers, he was *gauche* and ill at ease, with the people—"mes enfants" as he called them—he was himself; he could express his feelings in the homely language natural to them both. And it was this that Madame de Sabran—herself so deeply in sympathy with the poor and simple—loved in the ill-fated king.

"(Paris) *June* 29, 1786.

"The king arrived this morning at two o'clock; the queen gave him dinner with all his suite. He is delighted with his journey and every one is delighted with him. He stayed sixteen hours at Cherbourg to see the 'cône' launched, as well as to be present at all the manœuvres; and he insisted on their firing from the ship he was on, which they had wished to avoid doing, for fear of an accident. . . .

"They say that the king's boat in which he went to see the work that was going on ran aground on reaching the shore; the sailors and many others who were there threw themselves into the sea and carried the boat on their shoulders, so that the king was borne in triumph to land, amidst cries of 'Vive le Roi!' and demonstrations of the greatest affection. The king, they say, was touched to tears, and so were the spectators, not even excepting the English, whom curiosity had attracted.

"*June* 30, 1786.

"Nothing is talked of but the king's journey, so it is impossible for me to talk to you of anything else. All that he said, all that he did, his kindness, humanity, and affability to his poor people, the interest he took in the works at Cherbourg, and in all the manœuvres, still more the profound knowledge he displayed—all this, in a word, was perfect. An accident occurred

which could not have been foreseen, through a cable getting loose at the moment the 'cône' was being launched, which killed one man and injured two others; the king sent for the widow and children and settled a pension on them. He made magnificent presents to all who showed him hospitality . . . but a story is told of him that I like better than all this, because it reminds me of our good King Henri (IV). On his way through Houdan he was obliged to get down from his carriage . . . and, the good woman whose house he entered being out, her neighbours went to fetch her; she gave one bound, unable to contain herself at the thought of seeing the king, and that he was in her house, etc. In her delight she threw herself at his feet, and would have embraced his knees, but the king raised her up, with touching kindness, and asked her what she wanted, taking out his purse to give her money; she refused, saying she had only one favour to ask of him, but that she dared not. The king insisted on knowing what it was. 'It is to embrace you, sire,' she said; and he consented with the best grace in the world. After that he asked her questions about her little fortune, and whether she wished for anything. She said she had need of nothing, that, after the pleasure she had enjoyed she was happier than the queen, but that she had a very poor neighbour with eleven children who was on the point of being seized by pitiless creditors. The king sent for her neighbour, and when she had come he assured her that he would arrange all her affairs, that she had only to show herself at the place where he was to pass two days later and he would give her all she needed; and he kept his word. Admit that this was charming, and that one would think it was an anecdote about Henri IV."

At moments such as these Madame de Sabran was able to rouse herself from the grief that gnawed at her heart; yet, now that she was back in her quiet house the thought of the Chevalier was always with her, and as she wandered in the thick, green shade of her garden or turned over the old books in her library, torturing memories of the past stabbed her at every turn—it

was here, under this tree, that she had sat so often with Boufflers reading Ovid; there from the terrace she had heard him calling to her so many summer mornings like this during those first enchanting months of their friendship; at this spot he had held her in his arms. . . . All such moments, she told herself, were over now for ever. It was six months since she had heard a word from him; yet she knew he was alive and well, for he had written to other people. Yes, she was certain at last that he had ceased to love her, that all was at an end, and she had thrown away her love, her virtue, and her peace of mind for a man to whom she had been merely an episode—who had been able to forget her! Yet she loved him all the same. "I never knew what it was to love when I gave you my heart; had I known, I would have fought till death against so dangerous a feeling; but now I must submit and give you up my life." Still, as before, she sat through the midnight hours writing that journal to which she received no reply, and suddenly, amidst her pain and misery at his defection, her sense of humour flashes out and she realizes the absurdity of her task:

"Do you know, *mon enfant*, that my correspondence with you is exactly like that of the Maréchale de Noailles with the Holy Virgin? And even she received more answers than I do from you, whenever the Maréchal was in a good enough temper to send them to her!"

The old Maréchale de Noailles was a constant source of amusement to Paris at this date. "If one had not known her intimately," says "Madame de Créquy," "one would never have guessed that she was mad, and that she kept up a correspondence with the Holy Virgin and the patriarchs. She used to go and put her letters into the roof of a pigeon-cote at the Hôtel de Noailles,[1] and, as she always found answers to all

[1] The Hôtel de Noailles in the Rue Saint-Honoré, is now the Hôtel St. James.

her letters, it was supposed they were written by her almoner. (Madame de Sabran evidently thought it was the maréchal.) She was sometimes rather shocked at the familiar tone adopted by the Virgin Mary towards her. "*Ma chère Maréchale!* . . . one must admit the form of address is rather familiar from a little *bourgeoise* of Nazareth; but one must not be too exacting with the mother of our Saviour," she would add, bowing her head; "and besides, it must be remembered that the husband of the Virgin was of the royal race of David."

Nothing was further from the maréchale's mind than irreverence when she made these observations; she was, indeed, extremely devout, but so imbued with the ideas of rank prevalent at the Court of France in her youth that she could not refrain from applying them even to sacred personages—they had simply become a mania, and no doubt "Madame de Créquy" was right in saying she was mad.

Madame de Sabran, continuing her one-sided correspondence with the Chevalier de Boufflers, must indeed have felt at moments that she was employed as futilely as the old maréchale depositing letters in the pigeon-cote. With unfailing regularity she sat down every night at her writing-table and covered page after page with her fine little classical hand-writing; yet, as she wrote on, often worn out with fatigue, far into the night, she asked herself of what use was her devotion? He would probably never read what she had written. She had ceased to interest him. She was forgotten. "Quelle cruelle mort!" she cries. . . . "Quel affreux oubli!"

CHAPTER VIII

A PHILANTHROPIST IN AFRICA

We must now follow the fortunes of the apparently faithless Chevalier from the time he wrote his farewell letters to Madame de Sabran before sailing for Africa in the middle of December 1785.

The voyage to Senegal lasted nearly a month, for his frigate, no doubt on account of contrary winds, steered a devious course and from Rochefort sailed to the port of Lorient and thence by way of Madeira to the coast of Africa, which was reached on January 14.

Boufflers had with him a numerous staff: Monsieur Blanchot, his second in command, a former officer in Boufflers' regiment; Monsieur Villeneuve, his A.D.C.; Monsieur de Golbéry, chief engineer, and several others, all of whom seem to have proved more or less incompetent, for Boufflers in his journal complains continually of his difficulties in carrying out his plans. No doubt he was exacting, for his untiring energy led him to undertake an enormous number of schemes; he wanted to do everything at once, and had no patience with dilatory methods. Directly he landed in Senegal he set to work, putting things to rights in every direction—the barracks, which had fallen into terrible disrepair, had to be refurnished, and fitted with new beds; the hospital reorganized, and prepared for the many fever cases produced by the climate.

Next, the native cemetery claimed his attention; it was placed in the middle of the town, the graves were badly made, and, owing to the porous nature of the

soil, horrible exhalations were the result. In a long letter to the old Duc de Nivernais Boufflers describes his plan for moving this burying-ground into a desert place outside the city, ending naïvely with the words: "I am glad to be able to congratulate myself, before my dear master, on the first efforts I am making for the good of humanity; even had I been born brutal, it would have been enough to live with him in order to acquire the power of feeling."

The natives, unfortunately, did not approve of Boufflers' hygienic schemes, for in the heart of the town the dead had been protected from the ravages of the wild beasts that prowled around the district, and now out in the open country the graves became, before long, the resort of hungry hyenas. However, the Senegalese had quickly become attached to the new Governor, and they contented themselves with expressing their feelings in a song which they came and sang to him:

"Boufflers! Boufflers! You are very good to the living, but you are no good to the dead, for you expose our fathers to be eaten by the *bouquis*! [hyenas]."

Except for this detail the Chevalier was almost as much appreciated in Senegal as he was in Paris. True to his early ideals of humanity, his first thought was to improve their conditions of life. His predecessors, like most colonists from Europe at this date, had regarded the authority entrusted to them as a means for self-enrichment, and in Senegal, as in India, the temptation to "shake the pagoda tree" had too often proved irresistible. To Boufflers, desperate for want of money and eager to make a name for himself, this temptation might certainly have appealed.

"What, indeed, can one do out here," he wrote home to his sister three months after his arrival, "without society, without amusements; surrounded by knaves and slaves; with the idea that everything one does will be useless, unnoticed, or misinterpreted, whilst, on the other hand, five or six rascally tricks will

assure one a happy future—at any rate in this world?"

Yet, in spite of these discouragements, the Chevalier set himself to do his duty to his fellow-men with a thoroughness and zeal that should have sent his name down to posterity with that of Wilberforce. To Boufflers, indeed, belongs the greater honour. Wilberforce, born in the free country of England, brought up on enlightened principles and himself unaffected by the question of slave-trading, had far more incentive to abolish the practice than this man whose life had been passed at Courts and in the salons of Paris, and who, moreover, might have profited considerably by participating in the trade. Yet, whilst Wilberforce was still only preparing his campaign, the Chevalier de Boufflers had already embarked on a crusade against slave-trading on his own account. With an iron hand he put down slave-trading amongst his followers, and in districts beyond his control he often bought slaves himself in order to give them their freedom. Let those who imagine that the aristocrats of France at this period were merely scented and selfish dandies, read this letter written by his friend the Comte de Ségur to Boufflers in 1789, after his return from Senegal:

"Those poor Africans believed that we had no God but cupidity; you have cured them of this error! May your example be followed, may your voice drown that of selfish interest, and bring us to forbid that inhuman sale, that shameful trade in human flesh and blood! I am a colonist of Saint-Domingo, but I would sign my ruin with joy if the abolition of slavery were to be the reward. Do not let us leave to England the glory of that abolition. . . ."

The inhuman practices that prevailed in Africa at this time filled the large-hearted Chevalier with indignation; some of the Europeans were in the habit of

seizing old men and women as slaves in order to induce young and strong men to offer themselves in place of their parents. "Tous ont le cœur d'un marchand sous l'habit d'un officier!" he wrote in disgust.

But the Europeans were not the only offenders; the native potentates were quite as ruthless in their methods, and with these Boufflers dealt summarily. Finding the minister of a neighbouring king had carried off a young man and two girls from an island under the protection of France and was carrying them up the river in a boat, he hastily sent an officer and four men in pursuit, who brought back the minister, the king's son, and the three captives. "I had the two former placed under arrest and the three others set at liberty, and I told the minister to send a despatch to his master, to report to him what had happened, to convey him my reproaches, and to tell him that he would have neither his son nor his minister until he had made a suitable apology for the insult made to the protectorate of France and paid six fine oxen in compensation. If you had seen the naïve joy of the poor liberated ones," he tells Madame de Sabran in his Journal, "amongst whom there was a very beautiful girl, you would have been moved to tears, for I know you, good angel, and that your heart is a hundred times better than you know." The punishment of crime amongst the natives was one of Boufflers' greatest difficulties; order must be maintained, yet he dreaded reporting offences lest the delinquents should be treated with brutality by the authorities of the Admiralty deputed to administer justice. His efforts to rescue some thieves from prison, where they were awaiting their death, is very amusingly described in his Journal:

"I had found a way of getting my accused out of prison, but they have amongst them a horrid little merchant's clerk who stirs them up to revolt, even against the mercy I try to show them. The longer

I live amongst men the more I see one can only do them good in spite of themselves. But the little wretch will fail, and I hope will be punished all by himself, for the others have begun to restore secretly what they stole publicly, so that, instead of an atrocious execution which would have done no good, there will be complete reparation, which is better for every one."

Next day he writes joyfully :

" At last I hope that to-day my prisoners will be set free. This happens exactly on the day I had settled to give a fête to all the great ladies of the island (whom we call the signores) for their Easter eggs. You can imagine how sad the feasting and the ball would have been if the husbands, lovers, brothers, and cousins of all these ladies had been unable to dance with them, but left to expect that they would be sold for America. . . ."

But the natives were not easy to help. Once they were free there was always the problem of employment to be met, and with this object Boufflers attempted to start sugar plantations on which they were to work for their own profit instead of performing forced labour; but the difficulty was to get them to do anything without compulsion.

Boufflers' own energy was amazing. In a letter he wrote to the " controller-general " towards the end of the year 1786, we see the thoroughness with which he set himself to discover the resources of the country, and the stupendous tasks on which he gaily embarked. The sum of 10,000 francs, he states, is required to equip an expedition he proposes to make into the interior.

" The caravan will consist of four or five whites, of eight or ten negroes, of six horses, and six camels. It will start from the peninsula of Cap Vert, opposite Goree, and I shall lead it as far as twenty or twenty-

five leagues from the coast, to Guiguis, the residence of the King of Cayor. This prince will give me hostages for the safety of the travellers; he will provide guides and safeguards. . . ."

Boufflers' A.D.C. was then to be sent farther inland to make geographical and political observations, and besides this he was to bring back specimens " of all the minerals, of all the pebbles, of all the marbles he met on his way, also all the grains, all the plants, all the animals he could procure, besides samples of all the woods, of all the rubbers, of all the resins," etc. He was then to make arrangements for all these things to be sent by river to the coast, for fear of overloading the camels—a very necessary precaution! History, unfortunately, does not relate whether the A.D.C. carried out his orders, but if he really obtained specimens of all the animals he must have returned in charge of a Noah's Ark, for Senegal teamed with beasts and birds of every description. Boufflers, on his way down the Senegal River to Podor, describes the scene with probably more imagination than accuracy when he declares that he encountered tigers; still, no doubt an enormous variety of animal life was to be found there:

" We continue our journey between two desolate river-banks, escorted from afar by lions, tigers, hyenas, and leopards, and at close quarters by crocodiles and hippopotami with which the river swarms. We missed a tiger, and fired twice with a small cannon at a hippopotamus; but he escaped from danger."

The Chevalier's descriptions of his meetings with the natives of Senegal are often very amusing; he had not forgotten to provide himself with all kinds of things from Europe with which to win their favour. His purchases he paid for in kind—with " little mirrors,

snuff-boxes filled with cloves, with gunpowder, bullets, red handkerchiefs, and bad guns," whilst for the Moorish kings he reserved presents of a more munificent description. To the King of Podor he was particularly generous : " You will perhaps like to know what I am giving him," he tells Madame de Sabran in his journal : " A scarlet mantle braided with gold, ten pieces of blue guinea (a kind of cloth), a double-barrelled gun, a fine pair of pistols, twenty large amber beads, a beautiful coral necklace, with mirrors, scissors, combs, etc., etc., for the queen. The lords and ladies of the Court will all have presents proportionate to their dignity, and will bestow vermin on me in return (me rendront des poux en reconnaissance)."

In Senegal, as in Europe, it will be seen that the Chevalier was happier outside court circles, but he achieved immense popularity none the less amongst native potentates. A certain " gros monarque noir " —the most powerful monarch in Africa—vowed him eternal friendship :

" I entertained him at dinner and all the ' seigneurs ' of his Court ; I gave him presents ; I made the first treaty with him that he had ever signed. He was overcome by the order, the magnificence, the politeness of France. . . . He told me a thousand times that he had never seen a white man like me, that I should be all my life his greatest friend . . . that he would always regard me as his own son. . . . He had perfect order maintained amongst his numerous suite—there was not a teaspoon missing."

The admiration Boufflers excited in the heart of a native queen proved, however, rather embarrassing, for she arrived with her suite, uninvited, to stay with him :

" I have just received at my house one of the great queens of the country, who came with a numerous Court consisting only of men. The queen is as fat as

Madame de Clermont. She has two teeth like a wild boar's, and her eyes are smeared all round with horrid black grease. I gave her *eau sucrée*, wine, brandy, and biscuits ; she swallowed them all, and if I had given her myself she would have swallowed me too. . . . She asked for a lodging in my house. I could not offer it to her ; but she wants to come back again to-morrow, which will be a great nuisance, on account of her Court, who stink like a herd of goats."

Queens were not the only women to fall under the spell of Boufflers' fascination, and his successes amongst the ladies of Senegal were hardly less than his successes in the *salons* of Paris. There is, however, no reason to suppose that the Chevalier ever returned their admiration, nor, when we consider that the natives of Senegal are of the most pronounced negroid type, is this surprising. Such of Boufflers' biographers as have stated that he yielded to the seductions of native beauties during his stay in Africa did so probably as a concession to the popular tradition of Boufflers as an incorrigible Don Juan—his reputation must be maintained, and so they invented the story of his African " amours." The Chevalier himself, in a letter to his uncle, the Prince de Beauvau, describes an incident which might well explain this charge :

" The women of the place did me the honour of singing to me, and—according to the expression of the country—dancing. I did not understand very well what they were singing, but it would have been impossible to misunderstand the meaning of their dance. A man played an instrument ; all the company clapped their hands, and a *danseuse* came forward in her turn and went through all the convulsions of Mesmer. . . . She advanced towards me, rolling her eyes, twisting her arms, and making a thousand little movements that my chaste pen dares not describe, then, after a moment of complete prostration, she went back to the circle and made way for another pantomime. . . . After

the ball I rewarded them all with little presents, and the one I liked the best said she was very sorry not to have done better, but she was still weak after her confinement. As I expressed interest and sympathy, she thanked me very much and went to fetch her baby of a fortnight old, and asked permission to call it by my name. So there am I, like Monsieur de Maurepas, of whom Monsieur Tronchin said he had drawn a number without having put into the lottery."

The legend that later on little dusky "Boufflers" were to be seen running about the beach of Senegal, if not a pure invention, has probably its foundation in episodes as innocent as the one described in this letter, for the fashion of calling children after the popular Governor may very likely have spread through the country.

Whether Boufflers was always scrupulously faithful to Madame de Sabran or not, it is certain that he never ceased to love her. Why, then, did he never write to her during these six months in Africa? Why did he leave her racked by doubts and fears all the while he was away from her? To this question I can find no answer. It is possible that his letters did not reach her, for the difficulty of conveying the mails at this period was no slight one—letters were entrusted to any one who happened to be sailing for Europe and who might lose them or forget to deliver them. Storms, often, also prevented communication with the land, and on one occasion Boufflers describes the sending of a letter to Madame de Sabran by means of a negro who was to make part of his journey in a canoe and swim the rest with the letter enclosed in a bladder tied round his neck. It is easy to imagine that mails thus conveyed might fail to reach their destination.

However, it is also possible—judging from our knowledge of Boufflers' character—that he forgot to write; yet he certainly did not forget Madame de Sabran, and all the while that she was breaking her heart over his

silence he was daily pouring out his soul to her in his Journal.[1]

All through the voyage home he tells her of his frenzied impatience to reach France, his despair at the contrary winds which blew his ship, *Le Rossignol*, westwards to the Azores instead of aiding it in its northward course, thereby prolonging the voyage by several weeks. Every little delay maddened him. His companions wondered at his irritability: "These gentlemen," he says, "know well how one loves other women, but they do not know how one loves you—if they knew they would understand my impatience."

Boufflers' had apparently been just as casual with his mother as with Madame de Sabran, for he had never said good-bye to her before starting for Africa. It is true that she was in Lorraine, and it would have taken some time to reach her and return, but Madame de Boufflers apparently felt that he should have put all other considerations aside in order to do this, and she was too vexed to write to him whilst he was away. Stricken with remorse on his voyage home, Boufflers wrote to her as follows:

"At last I shall see you again, and already I feel all the joy of it—your joy as well as mine. I had no letters from you in Africa; only my sister sent me news of you which reassured me on the essential point—

[1] On this point the published "Correspondance" is again misleading, for the series entitled "Journal du Chevalier de Boufflers, second voyage au Sénégal" does not all belong to the second journey; a great many entries were written during his first visit to Senegal, but, owing to his inconvenient habit of omitting to date his correspondence, they have been wrongly attributed to a later date. Monsieur Pierre de Croze points out this mistake in his book "Le Chevalier de Boufflers et la Comtesse de Sabran," in the note on page 123, and we can verify his statement by examining the Journal ourselves. Thus we find that all the entries describing his voyage home must have been written on his return from his first visit to Senegal, for here and there they bear the date of July and August, which were the months during which he was at sea that year. On his return from his second journey he did not sail till November, and he reached France the last day of the year.

the safety of our treasure—to use the expression of Monsieur de Nivernais. But I was really unhappy at the thought that you had complained of me, and that you had believed that I had complained of you—the first would be the worst of misfortunes, the second the most infamous of crimes. The business I was obliged to transact before leaving was so novel and so perplexing to me that it did not leave me free for a week even to go and embrace you. . . . As soon as the first object of my journey has been fulfilled I shall get my sister to go with me to Lorraine, and I hope the first glimpse will dispel all misunderstanding, just as I have often heard you say that a ray of sunshine smooths away many difficulties. . . . Good-bye, my dear mother; you will never know how lovable or how loved you are."

Alas! when the Chevalier wrote these words his mother had been dead five weeks.

She had left Lorraine on a visit to her old lover, the Prince de Bauffremont, at Scey-sur-Saône, when an attack of apoplexy struck her down, and she fell into a lethargy from which she never awoke.

"What news I have to break to you, my dear husband!" writes Madame de Sabran. "I would not undertake it if I were not sure that your sister and your uncle had already told you of it. You have just lost your poor mother. I shed tears as bitter as if she were my own."

It was not till five weeks later that Madame de Sabran heard the news of the Chevalier's return. At last the long suspense was to end, and she would know now the reason of his silence.

"The news this morning of your arrival was so great a shock to me, my poor dear husband, that I have not yet recovered. Is it possible I shall see you again—perhaps to-morrow? From what you say, you must be just arriving. . . . The dreadful part will be that I shall certainly not be alone, and then what awkwardness, what constraint, what artifice will be necessary! . . . How I shall suffer! You were made to be my torment, bad child—what fatality made me know you?

[Tu es fait pour mon tourment, méchant enfant: quelle fatalité m'a fait te connaître ?] . . . Good-bye; I do not know what I am writing; I am too much overcome to describe what I suffer. I feel a storm within me destroying all my thoughts; I cannot see or hear; I tremble all over. I have not been able to eat all day. . . . How fortunate your sister is! She can go to meet you, show you all her joy, and never leave you, whilst your unhappy wife can only see you at moments, and never alone. Good-bye; it is true that there is no such thing as happiness, since I am not happy now. . . ."

Yes, even though he was coming back she was not happy. She could hardly live through the few days of suspense that followed; unable to sleep or eat, she waited only for the sound of his horse's feet in the courtyard, and when at last she heard them, when at last she saw him again, she could have died of joy and relief.

He still loved her! All her fears had been groundless. Before his glorious gaiety, at the sound of his ringing voice, of his great joyous laugh, all her sadness melted like the dew. He was so inspiring, this strange Chevalier who, for all his moods and tempers, had the power of carrying one away on the wings of his own exuberant vitality. He had come back bronzed and happy, full of his adventures in Africa, and with the oddest presents for all his friends. There was a parakeet for the queen, which talked Senegalese and French with equal fluency and had been carefully instructed in suitable greetings for its royal owner: "Où est la reine? je veux la voir. La voilà! Ah! qu'elle est belle! Je veux la voir toujours, toujours!" Then a horse for the Maréchal de Castries, a little negress for the Maréchal de Beauvau, a hen for the bishop of Laon, and an ostrich for the Duc de Nivernais. Several other animals had died on the voyage. "I have lost a green parrot with a red head that I had meant for Elzéar," he tells Madame de Sabran sadly in his Journal on the ship, "two little

monkeys that I was keeping for Monsieur de Poix, a spoonbill for the Bishop of Laon, five or six parakeets, and finally, last night I was present at the death of a poor yellow parrot, the first that had ever been seen in Africa, and, as he was unique amongst his kind, I thought of giving him to one who is unique amongst her kind, and who is to the human race what the human race is to parrots." So, since the yellow parrot was deceased, he had, as he told Madame de Sabran gaily, nothing to give her but a husband.

Yet this gift, too, was not forthcoming! Boufflers, who had hoped to improve his fortunes in Senegal, had, as we have seen, reduced them to a still lower ebb by his quixotic purchases of negroes and was now less than ever in a position to marry. So once again Madame de Sabran saw her dream of happiness vanish like a mirage. Still she must go on submitting to this false position—their equivocal relationship—still go on with the same subterfuges, the same concealments that were so hateful to her frank nature.

Society welcomed the Chevalier back with rapture; women raved about him, the salons fought for him, he was invited to all the country-houses, yet the woman who loved him must stand by and watch him claimed by all the world in turn, must listen impassively when his name was mentioned, behave as if he were nothing to her—this man who was hers, *hers* as truly as if she bore his name.

And then, at the end of five months—after a few hurried meetings, a few brief moments of happiness snatched amidst the rush of the Chevalier's busy life, another bitter parting took place and Boufflers sailed away on his second voyage to Senegal. It was at this crisis that Madame de Sabran found more than ever a friend in the old Duc de Nivernais. All the while Boufflers was away he invited her constantly to Saint-Ouen and did everything he could to console her for the absence of the Chevalier. Besides this, he gave her

excellent advice on practical affairs about which she was all too vague, and henceforth she undertook nothing without consulting him.

Boufflers, before sailing, wrote a charming letter to the old duke—" mon très cher maître "—confiding Madame de Sabran to his care. " I entrust to you some one who is very dear to me, and I rejoice at the thought that I am leaving her with one who is worth a great deal more than I am."

Just after Boufflers sailed the second time for Senegal a horrible thing happened at the house in the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré. For some time Madame de Sabran had noticed that her children were constrained and unhappy, but she had never been able to discover the reason, nor did it occur to her to connect the trouble with the pious Abbé Bernard to whom she had entrusted them. And now suddenly she made a dreadful discovery—the abbé was carrying on a scandalous intrigue with Delphine's maid, a woman named Darnaud, who was the wife of Monseigneur de Sabran's valet. By intercepting a letter from Bernard to his mistress, Madame de Sabran found out a foul plot devised by them, to poison Elzéar and secure the pension settled on the abbé by Madame de Sabran. The unfortunate Darnaud—the bishop's valet—was to be disposed of by the same method, leaving Madame Darnaud free to marry Bernard. The whole truth came out; the abbé had ill-treated Elzéar persistently, and had so beaten and frightened him that he dared not say a word about it. Moreover, he had succeeded in influencing both the children against their mother, and hence " the air of constraint " that had so puzzled and distressed her. Fortunately, all this was discovered in time to save Elzéar's life. Madame Darnaud was sent to La Force, and on the same day, December 4, 1786, the infamous abbé was safely deposited in the Bastille, where every one felt he was the right man in the right place.

After that all was peace again in the house in the Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré. " It seems to me as if I had chased the devil from my house," wrote Madame de Sabran. " I see nothing but laughing faces around me, my children have gone back to their natural gaiety, and we feel as if we were unhappy people who had escaped from a shipwreck."

But though " the devil " was now temporarily caged, he had already been able to do much mischief. During the seven years he had spent in Madame de Sabran's house he had made use of his opportunities to discover a family skeleton in the form of a reprobate half-brother of hers, Charles de Jean de Manville, the son of her odious stepmother. In 1784 he had been imprisoned in the Bastille for attempting to forge the will of a certain Monsieur de Chalus, but after a short time was removed to the prison of the Ile Sainte-Marguerite. Here his behaviour appears to have involved him in still deeper disgrace for the following year he was brought back to the Bastille (this time under the name of Villeman) with a note appended to his *lettre de cachet* enjoining the Governor to guard him more vigilantly than ever : " His Majesty desires that he should always be imprisoned as a dangerous subject, and for specially grave reasons known to his Majesty." Louis XVI was notoriously lenient in the matter of *lettres de cachet*, so Monsieur de Jean de Manville's offence can have been no trifling one, and it is therefore not surprising that Madame de Sabran should have declined to associate with so disreputable a relation. This apparently made him very angry, and he lost no opportunity of airing his grievances against her. Somehow or other the Abbé Bernard had managed to get into touch with Monsieur de Jean de Manville, and now took up his cause in revenge for Madame de Sabran's discoveries with regard to himself. At the time of his arrest he was just about to publish a pamphlet " unmasking " Madame de Sabran's conduct and

accusing her of getting her brother imprisoned in order to secure his property and of obtaining his own arrest in order to suppress these revelations. It may be imagined what misery these slanders caused poor Madame de Sabran, for, though her two enemies were now both in the Bastille, how long would they remain there? From this time she lived in dread of her life and of Elzéar's.

The absence of the Chevalier made her position all the more defenceless, but this time he did not leave her without news, and some selections from the charming entries in his Journal must be given here [1]:

(Written on board ship on the voyage out.) "We saw three islands to-day, Palma, Gomera, and Ferro [Palme, Gomère, et l'Ile de Fer], but from so far away that I could form no more idea of them than of that floating island, called the moon, in which Herschell and his sister, by means of a telescope forty feet long, lately discovered a volcano. This same Herschell will soon, they say, be able to distinguish its animal and vegetable products. The time will come when we too, like Monsieur and Mademoiselle Herschell, will make our little observations, and, instead of seeing what is going on in the moon, I shall see what is going on inside your head. I shall find there, perhaps, a little volcano; I shall see well-cultivated country, smiling landscapes, nothing wild or arid, but marvellous products in the way of flowers and fruit—in a word, an earthly paradise which my spirit will never desire to leave. Farewell, dear wife; I love you more than any one has ever loved on land or sea. It is midnight, and I am going to bed and to try to sleep. Perhaps my spirit then will cross the seas and come without a sound to your blue bed. Good-bye."

. . . . .

"In the midst of my toils and my travels, my business, my troubles and my hardships, my follies and repentances, my health and spirits still keep up, whilst you in

[1] As it has already been explained, few of these entries are dated, so it is possible that some of these were written during the Chevalier's first journey to Senegal.

a quiet and pleasant house, in the midst of all that should give peace and happiness, find worries that consume you, monsters that torment you, and difficulties beyond your strength. Why cannot I, dear child, give you some of that happiness that is with me everywhere? . .

"I shall soon be forty-nine, and soon consequently fifty and then the best thing that one can do is to live for the day without thinking of the past or future. . . . In thinking over my life since I met you I see that I have been far happier after forty than before. This is not usually the age of pleasure, but true pleasures have no age; they are like the angels, eternal children, and like you—you, who will always charm and always love. [Les vrais plaisirs n'ont pas d'âge: ils ressemblent aux anges, qui sont des enfants éternels]. . . . I put a good thirty years on one side so as to kiss you as if I were only eighteen."

. . . . .

"Everything passes away; that is my philosophy. That is what the unhappy should remember, and the happy should forget."

(Tout passe; voilà ma philosophie. Voilà ce qu'il faut que les heureux oublient, et que les malheureux se répètent.)

. . . . .

"I am going to bed and to try to sleep with the thought of you in my head, as greedy little children do sometimes, with a sugar-plum in their mouths."

. . . . .

"This morning my good negress came and said, 'Comment portes-tu toi sa matine?' I said to her, 'Assez bien, mais je n'ai point dormi.' 'Tu l'o pas doremi . . . non . . . c'est que tu penses loin.' She was right, poor woman! Good-bye; you who keep me from sleep, you who make me 'think far'—when shall I see you near?"

. . . . .

"At last I have seen you again, dear other half. Your charming portrait has arrived safely. It is the ornament of my wretched room; my eyes filled with tears as I looked at it. . . . Good-bye, dear heart; I must leave you for thirty black faces that are in my

room contemplating your white face and marvelling at your portrait."

. . . . .

"Things have not changed outwardly, but they vary inwardly, and I feel my courage revive in the midst of all that ought to damp it. . . . I have confidence in you. You are surely loved by spirits, fairies, sylphs, and genii, which you resemble far more than women, and the interest all these people take in you will reflect on me. I feel myself surrounded by little, invisible friends—some give me advice, others work secretly at my schemes, and so, unless I am mistaken, all will be well!"

. . . . .

"Let us talk of my farm-yard. I should like to see you in the midst of my pigeons, my hens, my ducks, and, above all, of my four geese—for these are my favourites since one of them had little ones. All the four lead them about with a sort of tenderness mingled with pride which leaves one in doubt as to which is the mother. The little ones walk in the middle, the father, mother, and aunts at the four corners, facing in all directions so as to keep away anything that would dare to approach their Elzéars and their Delphines—but there is a noise in my courtyard; some one has come to fetch me. Good-bye."

. . . . .

"I have just this moment bought a little negress of two or three years old to send to the Duchesse d'Orléans. If the ship that is to take her delays starting I do not know how I shall be able to part from her. She is lovely, not as the day, but as the night. Her eyes are like little stars, and her ways are so quiet and gentle that I am touched to tears at the thought that this poor child has been sold to me like a little lamb. She does not talk, yet she understands what one says to her.

"If you see her at the Palais-Royal do not fail to talk to her in a way she can understand, and to kiss her, whilst you think that I have kissed her too, and that her face is the point of meeting of our lips."

. . . . .

"I am a brute, *ma fille*! I have just returned from chasing little birds. I caught a dozen in nets;

they are exactly like yours. I reproach myself for keeping them in captivity until I send them to France at the peril of their lives. But that is not the worst thing I did ; I let off my gun with a loud report and with one shot killed two charming turtle-doves. They were on the same tree, talking, kissing each other, thinking only of love, and death came in the midst of their gentle play. They fell together without life or movement; their heads bent gracefully with such touching sadness that one would almost believe they went on loving after death. I pitied, yet I envied them ! They did not suffer, their life ended without pain ; their love never turned to coldness, and their poor little souls are still, perhaps, fluttering and caressing each other in the air. Yet, perhaps, they are afraid of being condemned one day to be born again at different periods and so to live without each other. All this gives one a great deal to think about—especially to you who love to lose yourself in systems and in sentiments. Good-bye, my child."

. . . . .

" I am so accustomed to the idea of being loved by you in spite of your youth and of my age that I think much less of my years as they increase. Do you remember that portrait [1] that I loved so much before I dared to speak of it to the original ? of that widow's dress that I wanted you to keep in my honour ? My age reminds me of it, but it does not make me think of you as changing ; only matter changes, and there is so little of that in you that I think I have nothing to fear. . . . Let us love life and not fear death, for souls do not die, but love on for ever ! " (Aimons la vie et ne craignons pas la mort, car les âmes ne meurent pas et s'aiment toujours.)

. . . . .

" How long life is, and yet how short ! It is like a vast sea, now calm, now rough, always treacherous, strewn with a thousand dangers, yet here and there with delicious islands. One day, I hope to put in at one of these islands and to find you there ; then, if I must go on with my voyage, I need no more embark without you, for that is worse than embarking without ship's

[1] Evidently the portrait mentioned by M. de Croze. See note, p. 88.

biscuit. You think the same, dear child, for you always do. You would be too fickle and ungrateful if you ceased to love me—but let us leave those fears and anxieties to others. . . . Good-bye, my wife; I will distrust you no more than the saints distrust God, for you are my God and I am your saint."

. . . . .

"The month of September will not go by without our seeing each other. For us are made the lovely autumn days, beginning with this autumn which will last all through the autumn of life. And, just as autumn will have retained the heat of summer, winter will retain the mellowness of autumn, and I love to believe that after that winter we shall see the birth of a perpetual spring in which we shall live near one another, with one another, by one another; perhaps under other forms, but what matter so long as we love each other? Perhaps we shall be gods, perhaps human beings again, perhaps birds; perhaps I shall be a plant and you my flower, then I shall arm myself with thorns to defend you, and shade you with my leaves to protect you; so, under whatever form you exist, you will be loved."

. . . . .

"O dear, O good, O tender wife! In what other mind, in what other heart, could one find all the charming things you say to me? They are not words, like everything one reads: they are thought, they are feeling, they are love, they are you yourself that I see in every line. . . . I thank you, I bless you, I kiss you a thousand times, good and lovely angel, and then I leave you until to-morrow, to swim through an ocean of business. . . . My writing-table is covered with accounts, registers, inventories, and memoranda; what a difference between these papers and those that are scribbled by your divine hand!"

At last, in November 1787, Boufflers' term of office ended, and he left Senegal with a *congé du roi*. His one thought was to leave the colony better than he found it, and his Journal shows how much his humanitarian ideals were encouraged by the influence of Madame de Sabran:

" All my predecessors," he tells her, " from first to last, have always regarded the colony as a dilapidated house from which every one tried to carry something away, instead of working to reconstruct it. Thanks to Heaven and you, whose principles I espoused in espousing you, I came here with quite other plans, and I think, too, that I shall leave with quite another reputation. I like to boast in this way, because it is boasting of you. We think alike, and, except for our faces—and a few other little differences whereby I gain rather than lose—we are alike, or rather, we are one."

Boufflers certainly did not leave Senegal like a dilapidated house ; his term of government had proved a golden age for whites and blacks alike, and when at last, on November 27, 1787, he sailed away to France we read that " a great wail of despair went up from the inhabitants of the colony that could be heard at two leagues from the coast."

CHAPTER IX

THE QUEEN OF THE ROSES

WHILST the Chevalier de Boufflers was away on his second journey to Senegal ominous events were taking place in France. Already the Assembly of Notables had been summoned—" that famous assembly that has set all heads fermenting," Madame de Sabran wrote in her Journal on December 3, 1786; yet even she was far from realizing its significance.

" All this will resolve itself into a simple consultation which will pass off quite quietly, for I do not think that in this century there are notables who would venture to play the Romans; the stage would hardly be suited to the part, and it is not at the Court that one is likely to see private interest give way to public interest. But enough of politics. I will talk to you of them now and then to amuse myself and to divert you, for I foresee that this will only be a source of amusement all the winter, and nothing else."

Madame de Sabran was often at the Court this summer. We find her hurrying there in June to condole with the queen on the death of the poor little princess, Madame Sophie, the child for whose birth she had heard the cannons sounding only eleven months before. The queen, in whose arms she died, was heart-broken. Why did she grieve so deeply, some one asked her, for so young a child—a mere baby of whom she knew as yet but little? " Ah! but she might have become a friend! (Elle eût été peut-être une amie!) " Marie Antoinette had answered sadly. She needed friends more than

ever, this unhappy queen to whom court etiquette forbade even the consolation of remaining in solitude to mourn her child; a formal reception was held at Versailles to which every one came and offered their condolences. Madame de Sabran found even her powers of sympathy strained by all this ceremonial, and she returned from the Court too cross and tired to tell the Chevalier more than three lines about it: "June 25, 1787. I saw the king and the queen, and in order to reach them I was squeezed, pushed, stifled, and jostled till I could hardly drag myself along."

It was this year, at the wonderful house of Madame de la Reynière, nicknamed "the best inn for people of quality," that Madame de Sabran met Madame de Staël, then only twenty-one and in the first flush of her triumphs:

"I had the good fortune to find myself . . . in a corner of the salon with Monsieur Thyard, the Swedish ambassadress (Madame de Staël), Madame de Boufflers [1] and Madame de Cambise.[2] They were certainly the most interesting element in the crowded assembly. I amused myself very much by observing the different kinds of wit, and I decided that Monsieur Thyard's was the pleasantest, the ambassadress's the maddest, that of Madame de Cambise the most subtle, and your dear cousin's the most artificial. I should like to spend more evenings like that. . . ."

This was one of the rare moments when she was happy in society; more often its futility wearied her to death:

"What a strange life is this we lead in Paris! I can never get used to it. Always on the rush, always going to see people who care no more for you than you for them; always repeating the same sentences, never

[1] The Comtesse de Boufflers, the Chevalier's cousin. See Appendix, p. 420.

[2] The Chevalier's first cousin, the daughter of his mother's sister, the Princesse de Chimay.

appearing as one really is, never saying what one really thinks—all this constraint and elaboration kills me. I cannot be anything but what I am, and yet I feel I ought to be different. When in this mood a longing often comes to me to run away—but where to? Everywhere I should find the same inconsistencies, the same follies, the same absurdities. One would have to inhabit a desert, and a desert without you would be dreadful."

Madame de Sabran describes various encounters with some of Boufflers' relations during his second voyage to Senegal. His great aunt, the Maréchale de Luxembourg, had died in the odour of sanctity and lamented by all the poor of the district, soon after the Chevalier had sailed.

"What terrible news I have to tell you again, my dear husband!" Madame de Sabran had written. "You have just lost a second mother; the poor Maréchale de Luxembourg has paid the tribute of your second voyage. I reserve myself for the third—there must be a victim for each."

Since the death of the Marquise de Boufflers during the Chevalier's first voyage, her daughter, Madame de Boisgelin, had lived with Madame de Mirepoix in the Rue de Varennes and Madame de Sabran tells Boufflers of an amusing visit she made to the maréchale:

"*June* 28, 1787.

"I went to-day to see your old aunt in her splendid house, and she showed me a black parrot you sent her which looks to me like a crow. She told me it talked very well, but, as it did not do me the honour of addressing a word to me, I was unable to judge of that for myself. She told me also about a little negro you sent to Madame de Blot, who is a little monster, so she says, and very badly brought up. The moment he saw her [Madame de Mirepoix] he screamed horribly, threw himself on the ground, and showed the greatest terror; but to every one else he was affectionate. When they asked him why, he answered that she was making faces

at him.[1] The maréchale was certain that he had some reason for thinking her different to other people and was very much annoyed at his frankness. It makes one tremble to think how little we know ourselves—is this a good or a bad thing? I cannot make up my mind on that point, but I think illusions are useful in everything. . . . The thing most to be desired is to be well deluded to the last day of one's life. [Ce qu'il y a de plus à désirer, c'est d'être bien trompé jusqu'à son dernier jour.] You see how good-natured I am—but don't count on that."

Madame de Boisgelin—the one-time "divine mignonne" of Lunéville—had at first deeply resented her brother's devotion to the pretty widow, but at this moment she appears to have made herself more agreeable. Catherine de Boisgelin was not an amiable character; she was, in fact, what we should call in modern speech a "cat," and she found it difficult to forgive another woman for being as attractive as Madame de Sabran. She herself was now no longer either "divine" or "mignonne," having grown very large and plain. "She was a monster of ugliness," says the Duc de Lauzun, "but quite agreeable, and as flirtatious as if she had been pretty." Yet, in spite of these disadvantages, she succeeded in inspiring one wild devotion and in no other than the poet Florian. Florian was an equerry of the Princesse de Lamballe, and one of the most attractive men of his day; yet he fell a hopeless victim to a violent and invincible passion for Madame de Boisgelin. "He would not speak; condemning himself to silence, he gazed at her from afar, because he said he was afraid of loving her too deeply and of being no longer master of himself."[2]

Few other people found much difficulty in not loving Madame de Boisgelin too deeply. Madame de Sabran found her particularly hard to bear; at one moment

[1] Possibly it was the maréchale's shaking head that frightened him.
[2] "Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirch."

she was charming, at the next out came the claws, and Madame de Sabran found her gentle overtures of friendship repulsed. A woman who is incapable of feline amenities is always at a disadvantage with a "cat," and so Madame de Sabran usually retired wounded and Madame de Boisgelin triumphant from these encounters. In her Journal to the Chevalier Madame de Sabran describes her sufferings so vividly that one can see exactly the kind of scenes that took place between them—poor little Eléonore, her blue eyes full of apprehension, and large Madame de Boisgelin bearing down upon her with loud, tactless inquiries as to when she had last heard from the Chevalier. Sometimes Madame de Sabran had not heard for a long while, and this ruthless probing of an aching wound was almost more than she could bear. She is "petrified with fright," she writes one day, for Madame de Boisgelin has invited herself to supper and Madame de Sabran *knows* she is going to flaunt a letter from the Chevalier, whilst she herself has received none. Her naïve description of the supper-party that followed must be given in her own words:

"I told you that I was expecting your sister to supper. I had invited little Abbé Bonneval, whom she rather likes, with Mr. Hailes, whom I like very much, to make up the party, so that she should not be bored by a cruel *tête-à-tête* with me. Everything being arranged, she arrives at ten o'clock with her eyes starting out of her head, and, these gentlemen having already arrived, she takes me by the hand, drags me into the recess of a window, and asks me eagerly whether I have had news of you. This question was just what I dreaded most in the world—I felt as if I had received a dagger-thrust. I said 'No,' and tremblingly asked her if she had had any. 'No,' she said, 'but I have just left Madame de Lauzun,[1] who has received one of eight pages in which he tells her that he is writing to me, so every moment I expect my packet. I cannot think why it has not

[1] Bouffiers' cousin, Amélie, Duchesse de Lauzun, later Duchesse de Biron.

arrived already!' I saw plainly that she was enjoying my anxiety and the pleasure of seeing that I was no better informed than she was. But what matter? I kept my countenance, and tried to be at my best all through supper. But that is not all! As we were leaving the table and had hardly arranged ourselves by the fireplace with candles all round us to light your sister's work, a big packet was brought in from Monsieur de Nivernais. It was from you! She shows it to me, reads it, tries to make me read it. All this time I hardly knew where I was—so great was the shock to my head and heart. I felt a cold perspiration break out all over me; for a few minutes I was petrified. But the thought that all eyes were on me, particularly those of my daughter, brought me back to reason and to life; I made so great an effort to control myself that I was able to join in the conversation, to listen, and answer almost to the point. I kept back my tears, ready to flow, and summoned the strength to tell your sister that I was charmed to see her so contented and happy. She showed me your letter, which I pretended to read, but, to tell the truth, I could not read a word, however much I wished to—there was a cloud over my eyes, and I felt such inward distress that I lost all the thread of the ideas and could only make out a few lines. Your sister was so preoccupied—naturally, at this moment—that I do not think she noticed. Her part was less difficult to play than mine, and she was fairly agreeable for the rest of the evening, which seemed to me an eternity. Every now and then she looked at me with eyes that said nothing, as if she wished to see into my heart—so it seemed to me, for I knew no more at this moment than if I had been drunk. At last every one left me to my fate, except my daughter, whom I sent quickly off to bed so as to give myself time to breathe. . . ."

Oh, the relief of being alone, safe from those hard, inquiring eyes, free to break down and give vent to that storm of tears she had kept in check all through this interminable evening! She wept long and passionately, wept till she could weep no more, and then, with the calm

that succeeded to the tempest, came a gentle voice, the voice of reason that, for all her wild moments of abandonment, was ever ready to make itself heard. "He loves you," this voice repeated; "and what would you do without him, what would he do without you, in this world so little made for either of you? Where else would you find such kindliness, such candour, and such sympathy? . . . *Va! Il t'aime!*" As these thoughts came to her she says she felt a sudden wonderful happiness—"a sort of blessedness, like divine love," and for more than two hours she remained wrapped in this almost unearthly peace, heedless of the passing hours of the night.

How needlessly she suffered—this passionate spirit bound in so fragile a body! For all the while the letters about which she had shed these bitter tears were on their way to her! The next day they were here, here in her trembling hands, to be carried into the old library and read and reread and wept over in the way she once described to the Chevalier. When a packet of his letters reaches her, she tells him, she cannot bring herself to open them:

"I gaze at my treasure and hardly dare to touch it. I examine the address, I look at each letter to see if you were hurried when you wrote it, to know what you were thinking of. I come to the seal . . . and I tremble, I dare not break it. . . . My heart beats, and at last I yield for fear some intruder may come and keep me too long from satisfying my curiosity. The packet once open, I begin with the last letter as bearing the latest date. I think I am reading but I am not, so deeply am I moved; my eyes fill, and the packet on my knees is wet with tears. I kiss each page separately but I read them with the same fear and caution with which I should touch a razor or other weapon that I fear might wound me. It takes me more than twenty-four hours to know what they contain. . . ."

Such were the sufferings that this desperate love of hers

brought with it, the tortures of uncertainty that assailed her whenever Boufflers was away. At these moments the rage she had given way to that day at Valenciennes would sometimes overcome her—rage at herself, at her own impotence to throw off the chain in which he held her; rage with him, at his power to hurt her. Fears for his constancy haunted her; she is filled, she says, with "horrid suspicions that like vultures gnaw my heart, and with dull anger that in a moment transforms me into a fury."

Yet for Delphine's sake she must now more than ever show a smiling face to the world. For Delphine was now sixteen and during the last year there had been a question of her marriage to Armand de Custine, the son of the famous general, Adam Philippe, Comte de Custine, field-marshal to the armies of the king.

Armand de Custine, now only nineteen years old, was a charming, clever, and handsome boy; but his father proved, as Madame de Sabran expressed it, "a scourge sent from Heaven."

The general was a very tiresome and aggressive person, who succeeded in making life unbearable even to those he really loved. Long ago, in his youth, he had married a lovely, gentle creature, Mademoiselle de Logny, whom he adored but kept in perpetual terror of his tempers. She died when she was only twenty-three, leaving two children—Armand and a daughter, Adèle, who married the Marquis de Dreux-Brézé, master of ceremonies at the Court. In the army, General de Custine was popular in spite of the iron system of discipline he had imported from Germany—his face with its large, bristling moustache amused the soldiers, who nicknamed him "General Moustache"; but it is easy to imagine the paralysing effect such a personality would have on Madame de Sabran. From the beginning they never understood one another at all—the general's authoritative manner and want of any sense of humour

exasperated Madame de Sabran, whilst the general, on the other hand, had no patience with Madame de Sabran's vagueness about practical matters nor with the whimsicality that so charmed and amused her friends. Worn out after one of her interviews with "le beau-père," Madame de Sabran thus pours out her troubles to the Chevalier in her Journal:

"I have been so dreadfully bored all day, my child, that I am as sleepy this evening as a dormouse. I have not had a moment to myself; this rôle of mother-in-law wearies me, and I don't know how to be conventional enough to fill it worthily. [Je ne sais où prendre toute la pédanterie qu'il me faudrait pour le remplir dignement.] Our father-in-law tires me still more, and I am at a loss to find phrases with which to answer him, and ears with which to listen to him."

Madame de Sabran, however, was determined to go through with it; Armand was so charming, and already in love with the beautiful Delphine, whose heart, her mother tells the Chevalier, is also melted by the fires of the little god of love. If only the general would come to the point, and fix the day that was to make these two happy!

One morning in July he was announced as usual, and Madame de Sabran hoped that this time he had really come to settle matters finally. But once again he embarked on a long discourse on the preliminaries of the marriage. There were many formalities to be gone through, he explained, on account of his son's minority; there were lawyers to be consulted, lands to be assessed, and so on, interminably, until at last Madame de Sabran could bear it no longer.

"Monsieur," she said coldly, "these are difficulties you might have foreseen long ago. I altered all my plans under the impression that you desired as much as I did to settle this matter. I ask you now to fix the day for the marriage, and leave me no longer in uncertainty."

At this the general, seeing that he had to deal with a woman of spirit, immediately became meek, as bullying natures do when faced with determination.

" I will go at once," he murmured courteously, " and see my man of business, and afterwards, madame, I hope to have the pleasure of dining with you."

" Monsieur, I shall be charmed."

At dinner-time he returned with Armand, and now all seemed finally settled ; but two days later he made fresh difficulties, and Madame de Sabran, in despair, resolved to summon her friends the Polignacs to the rescue, who, as hardened people of the world, might prove a better match for the dictatorial general than she could hope to be. The Polignacs on this occasion certainly used their talent for intrigue to some purpose ; they invited Madame de Sabran and General de Custine to dine at Montreuil, and the duke soon brought the *beau-père* to reason. " There is nothing like having good friends. The duke has smoothed everything out. The contract will be signed on Sunday week."

After that all went well, and through the formalities that preceded the marriage Madame de Sabran bore up bravely and tried heroically—though evidently vainly—to play the part of the conventional mother-in-law :

" I get through it somehow, for in time one gets through everything ; but I feel that I do nothing like other people, and that I am wanting in a certain gravity and preciseness which on such an important occasion should distinguish my actions. Instead of this I make everybody laugh—even the father-in-law, though at the bottom of his heart, I believe, he thinks me very absurd. It is not, I hope, the same with the son, whom I love as if he were my own, and who is really worthy of all my maternal affection."

When the day came at last for signing the marriage contract Madame de Sabran was so happy that she resolved to celebrate the occasion by a picnic.

"Whilst Delphine's marriage contract was being signed to-day at Versailles," she says gaily to the Chevalier, "what do you think I did to divert my mind from a stifling ceremony? I went to dine with my children alone in the park of Meudon, on the grass, beside a little spring of which the gentle ripple lulled us to rest and the clear water refreshed us. By this you will easily recognize your poor widow, who is of the same nature as the birds—except for their instability—and is only happy in the fresh air and in freedom. Really I had not been so happy for a long while—we stayed all day, walking about, laughing and talking."

Next day the marriage contract was signed at Madame de Sabran's house, and she breathed a sigh of relief at feeling that everything was now irrevocably settled: "My Delphine will be Madame de Custine in spite of all the powers of hell conspiring against her and me." Six days later she started off gaily with her two children for Anizy, where the wedding was to take place. The Bishop of Laon, Monseigneur de Sabran, was to perform the ceremony, and Armand de Custine was to arrive with his father and sister on the morning of the wedding-day, July 31. Let us leave Madame de Sabran to relate the events that followed:

"*The 29th of July.* At Anizy.

"I found the good Comtesse Auguste [de la Marck] here on my arrival; she had been waiting for me since yesterday, and as a friend—and a very good friend—has come to rejoice with us at the wedding. . . . I am going to bed quickly so as to look fresh at the ceremony beside my half-opened rose [Delphine], and not to make a blot on the picture; for, though I can no longer adorn a fête, I need not disfigure it. Good-bye, my child; if you think as I do you will always love me without regard to the beauty of youth. There is something within us that is worth more, and that can enable us till we are a hundred, or even over, to enjoy the happiness of loving and of being loved. The soul never grows old, and I have in mine a furnace of love for all eternity. Good-bye."

" The 30th of July.

" I am writing to you, my child, in the midst of all the agitations and preparations for the marriage. . . . To-morrow is the great day which must settle for ever the fate of my poor little Delphine. If one could count on happiness, I should have every reason to believe she will be happy; but when I think of all the ingredients that go to make up happiness, and the difficulty of combining them all, and of the multitude of circumstances that may traverse the most perfect harmony, as comets in the midst of the solar system may disturb its order and give birth to storms, I tremble. . . . Good-bye, my child, I am feeling harassed to-night; agitation of mind is far more tiring than agitation of body; it is this that kills me, for I shall never be able to keep as calm as other people under any circumstances."

By what strange clairvoyance did she dream of storms for these two setting out so gaily on the adventure of life? All through her letters written at the time of Delphine's marriage runs the same note of foreboding, yet even then she little guessed the nature of the storm that was to burst over them all. The terrible future was mercifully hidden from her eyes.

The wedding-day dawned calm and serene, and was marred only by an unromantic *contretemps*, for Armand arrived pale and shaken after the efforts of a clumsy dentist to remove an aching tooth which had ended in a bit of his jaw being removed with it. Delphine, on her part, had spent an almost sleepless night, for her mother, by way of preparing her for marriage, had gently attempted to initiate her; but only succeeded in completely mystifying her, so that the arrival of Armand in the morning threw her almost into a panic. At last the hour for the ceremony arrived, and Madame de Sabran must again take up the thread of narrative:

" Everything was ready at one o'clock, and in great state and the gloomiest silence we reached the bishop's chapel—I, holding my daughter by the hand, followed

by my little son-in-law and his father. Never has my heart beat so violently as at the moment when I left her on the *prie-dieu*, where she was to say that famous 'yes' which, once uttered, can no more be unsaid, however much sometimes one may wish it. My own made less impression on me, and yet what a difference! I was marrying an infirm old man of whom I was to be less the wife than the sick-nurse, and she a young man full of charm and goodness. But in those days I little realized the consequences; everything seemed good to me, equally good; loving nothing, everything seemed to me worthy of love, and I felt for my good old husband the same feeling as for my father and my grandfather—a very tender feeling that at that time satisfied my heart. Time has undeceived me now, and, on the contrary, I believe no longer in happiness, and so all through mass I shed a flood of tears. I do not know what people must have thought of me, but I was too overcome to control myself. My Delphine did not weep, but her little face grew longer, and her husband looked hardly more sure of himself. The bishop made them a sermon full of reason and feeling, which touched every one. Elzéar held the canopy, and, as he was too small, he was put up on a chair of the chapel, and looked like one of the little angels in the Annunciation of the Virgin.

"The ceremony over, Monsieur de Custine, the father, took possession of my daughter and I of his son, and we went out in the same order and with the same solemnity that we went in. We reached the *salon*, where a very good breakfast awaited us. . . .

"After breakfast we went down into the garden, and as we arrived there a troop of shepherds and shepherdesses, headed by the bailiff, came to compliment the married couple, and each one sang his little couplet like in the 'Amoureux de quinze ans'—it was very touching. After that we danced quite informally, like simple folk with the village fiddlers. I opened the ball with Monsieur de Custine the father, and my children, and never, I assure you, have I felt so agile or danced so heartily. The songs and dancing lasted all day—it was enough to make one die of laughing. Amongst the number [of songs] there were some rather original

ones, particularly the carpenter's, who, no doubt, is a descendant of the famous Adam. He had used a ream of paper to make what he called the 'brouillard'[1] and it was four pages long—we thought we should never get to the end of it. He stood on a chair so that we should hear him better, which made the fête look exactly like Tenier's pictures. When we were tired of dancing we played at *pharaon*; the men made a bank, which amused us till supper-time—that is to say, till eight o'clock. The bishop gave a splendid feast, with his usual magnificence."[2]

But now the midnight hours were drawing near, and with them, as Madame de Sabran said, "le vrai quart d'heure de Rabelais" when, according to the strange custom of the day, the young couple were led away by their parents and left together. "I assure you," she says to the Chevalier, "that when we had to lead the bride to bed I trembled, and was as embarrassed as she was—old though I am. One day, by my chimney corner, I will tell you about this little scene, to make you laugh, for I was obliged to prompt the father, so that he in turn should prompt his son, and never in my life have I felt so foolish—I believe I shall be quite red to-morrow."

[1] He meant, of course, "brouillon" = rough copy. *Brouillard* = fog.

[2] In context with this description it is curious to read the account given by Madame de Genlis of the changes effected by the Revolution in this feudal hospitality. After her return to France in 1800 she made many visits to the country châteaux now inhabited by the parvenus that the Revolution had substituted for the old aristocracy. "I was scandalized," she writes, "at the fêtes given to them [the peasants]: the master of the château opened his gardens to them, with permission to invite the publicans and eating-house keepers from whom they [the peasants] bought the wines and food that we gave them before with great liberality, but distributed with discretion so as to prevent drunkenness. Quarrels, scandalous and often brutal scenes, were the result. Another thing that struck me as most ridiculous was the arrogance of the ladies of the châteaux, who, at these rejoicings, would not dance with the peasants. I remember that in the old days at these *bals champêtres* we would dance with no one else, and forbade the men of our own society to ask us to dance, only allowing them to dance with the peasant girls" ("Mémoires de Madame de Genlis," vol. v. p. 108)

At last Madame de Sabran found herself alone in her own room with her thoughts, and a great tide of passionate regret swept over her. She thought of Delphine, with all her youth and loveliness, in the arms of a husband who was yet a lover; she thought of all that love might be, and in the bitterness of her soul she thought of love as she had known it—a guilty secret to be hidden from the world, a relentless force that destroyed all one's peace of mind, that, instead of lifting one up to heaven, led one through hells of misery and remorse. Why should these things be? Her love, she knew, was as pure as Delphine's, yet in the judgment of the Church she was a wicked woman; she had sinned! And at this thought a bitter cry arose in her heart, and found vent in these words that ended the entry in her Journal that night to the man who had brought her all this suffering:

"Why am I not now in the place of my daughter? Why are not you in the place of my son after receiving, as they have done, the permission of the Church? For, otherwise, *it is the work of the Evil One that places us in hell in this world and the next, so says Saint Augustine.*"

. . . . .

Armand and Delphine were very happy during those first few months of their marriage. Madame de Sabran, looking on at these two, both so young, so beautiful, and so much in love, trembled for the ending of the idyl: "I found my two little turtle-doves cooing their love in the prettiest way in the world. . . . If only it lasts!"

Did she already guess something of Delphine's strange temperament, so different from her own? To her, love was Stanislas de Boufflers, and apart from him had no existence; to Delphine, Armand represented love, and it was love she lived for—the emotion rather than the man that mattered to her. She revelled in the feeling of power, in the discovery that

by her charm and beauty she could bend his will to hers.

"You would laugh if you could see how Delphine leads her little husband," Madame de Sabran tells the Chevalier; "they are the funniest little couple ever seen. I don't know how long it will last, but at this moment she is an absolute queen, and thoroughly enjoys her kingdom. Love is a pretty thing in its first youth; unhappily, it changes quickly and becomes very plain and churlish as it grows older, like all spoilt children." (C'est une jolie chose que l'amour dans sa première jeunesse; malheureusement il change bien vite et devient bien laid, bien maussade en grandissant, comme tous les enfants gâtés.)

A week after the wedding another fête took place in honour of the newly married couple, and there was more merry-making for the villagers, who, as yet, unenlightened by revolutionary doctrines, were simple enough to love the good bishop and his family, in whom they failed to recognize their natural enemies. At midnight we find Madame de Sabran sitting down to tell the Chevalier all about it:

"*The 7th August*, 1787.

"I cannot resist giving you a description of the funniest, most original and ridiculous fête that Elzéar and I gave to the young couple to-day. It was 'les noces de Gamache.' The bishop wanted to give a dinner to all his peasants, so we seized on this occasion, which exactly suited our subject. Tables were put up in the garden in front of the château, which were loaded with joints, pies, turkeys, etc. Little Peinier and her brother represented the bride and bridegroom; they arrived with a numerous following to the sounds of the violins that went before them, and sat down at the table. Whilst they were there a troop of shepherdesses were to be seen emerging from the wood to sing some doggerel verses that Elzéar and I had composed in honour of the bride, whilst from the other side a troop

of shepherds came to compliment the bridegroom. All then sat down to the table, and it was a pleasure to see them eat.

"In the middle of the feast a cavalier armed from head to foot was seen appearing in the distance, with a lance in his hand, mounted on a wretched horse that he had much difficulty to make go on, and followed by a little, short, fat man who was whipping up his donkey. At first we could not think who they could be, but on looking more closely we recognized Seigneur Don Quichotte de la Manche and his faithful squire Sancho Pança. They arrived gravely in the midst of the assembly to take part in the general rejoicings. You would have laughed, I am sure, at the faces of these two people, the funniest I ever saw, particularly that of Sancho, which was worth painting, for we had had the good fortune to find an oddity ready-made for the part, with his jovial face and manner. In trying to get off his donkey he fell to the ground, which at once made everybody die of laughing; after that he went to give his hand to his master so as to help him to get free from Rossinante, which was not easy, for he could not move. He had been provided with a large soup-plate for a buckler and a barber's basin for a helmet. As soon as he had reached the ground he advanced towards the bride with all the gravity of a knight-errant, to sing her a couplet. . . .

"Later on there were donkeys and carts to take us to Pinon, where we ended the day with a *bal champêtre*, from which we only returned at nearly eleven o'clock, and, in spite of the fatigues of so full a day, I cannot go to bed without telling you of all that happened, to compensate myself a little for the untold pleasure I should have felt if you had been here. How you would have contributed to the enjoyment of this little fête by your wit and gaiety! What charming couplets you would have made in the place of all our nonsense, and how happy your poor widow would have been! But we must not think of all that. Let us love each other from the opposite ends of the world, if we are condemned to live apart. I do not know if you are to be answered for, but I answer for myself through life and death, whatever happens."

A fortnight later Madame de Sabran started off with Armand and Delphine for Plombières, and from there they made a delightful expedition into the Vosges. Out on the mountains " Fleur des Champs " was in her element. " You know," she says to the Chevalier, " that on these occasions I am always possessed of superhuman strength, especially when I can go and lose myself in the clouds, and for a few moments get away from this horrid little earth, where so many things distress me." We can see her making her way nimbly up the mountain passes, as Boufflers once described her—" like a little chamois bounding from point to point."

" She was very slim," Monsieur Pierre de Croze tells us, " and her feet were very small—those pretty feet of which her friends spoke so often in their letters. On them she wore only satin slippers, for she had her whims, and would never take to boots. She was one of those fragile women who practise every kind of sport, who seem to have only a breath of life in them, yet who tire out their husbands. In this way she would walk for whole days through the mountains, admiring the beauties of nature and whiling away the tedium of the road by her irresponsible talk, sad or gay, serious or frivolous."

In this passionate love of nature she was far ahead of her day, for it must be remembered that at this period the so-called devotees of the simple life, inspired by Rousseau, preferred, as a rule, to carry on their worship at a distance, and to dream of fields and woodlands in gilded *salons*, beneath painted ceilings. Even in England, where life was far less artificial than in France, the " soul of nature," as Madame de Sabran calls it, was almost undreamt of until ten years later, when the Lake poets arose and Wordsworth began to teach the world his great message. Yet already Madame de Sabran was standing on the mountains of

the Vosges thinking these thoughts that she relates to the Chevalier :

" In spite of my fatigue, I must tell you, my child, of the loveliest expedition I have ever made in my life, and the most extraordinary. Only think ! we set off at one o'clock in the morning in the most beautiful weather ; the moon was shining with gentle radiance amongst countless stars that gave forth a glittering light. The silence of the night was only broken by the sound of water falling from the rocks, and by a light breeze that gently stirred the pine-trees. This uncertain light that glimmered on the sleeping world showed us now precipices, now the smiling summits of the mountains and the roofs of scattered châlets, and brought to our souls a peace that I had never felt before. As we went higher it seemed to me that every thing had dwindled so much that one had only to go higher still for them to disappear altogether, and thereupon I felt so vividly the folly of men who set so much value on things so small, and who of their own free will, without regret, deprive themselves of the lovely scenes of nature in order to shut themselves up between thick walls where they do nothing but worry, grow embittered, and decay. I grieved to think that I belonged to so pitiable a race, and I felt something higher within me, uplifting me and making me a part of the scheme of things—*the soul of nature*.

" From time to time I sat down on the moss to give myself up wholly to my thoughts, whilst my two children [Armand and Delphine] went on ahead, thinking naturally much more of love than of philosophy—each has its own time. We cannot know in spring-time what will happen in summer, autumn, and winter. At their age they only see the flowers, they do not think how long they will last ; they do not think there may be thorns. . . ."

Again that strange note of foreboding ! " We cannot know in spring-time what will happen in winter " ! Did she remember the thoughts that rose in her this wonderful September morning when that awful winter

came six short years later . . . ? But now it was spring in their hearts ; tragedy seemed very far away. Even the chill of dawn upon the mountain-top could not damp their spirits. Madame de Sabran shivered as they waited for the sunrise; but " my two little lovers sat together so close, so close, in the shelter of love that they soon grew warm." The sun rose at last in a blaze of splendour behind the distant snow-peaks and warmed the travellers with its rays. By this time they began to realize that they were extremely hungry, and, looking around them, descried a small châlet on the crest of the mountain. Hunger drove them to the door, where a hospitable peasant received them, and they were soon seated on rough wooden benches breakfasting gaily on new milk, bread and cheese.

" It was then," Madame de Sabran tells the Chevalier, " that I thought of you. How you would have done honour to the frugal meal and filled your poor wife with joy! I could almost hear and see you, laughing with those great shouts of laughter that I love so much, and saying in a flash a thousand charming things, one more piquant than the other, inspired by the mountain air, the freedom, and simplicity of the surroundings. As for me, I was so happy and lighthearted that I felt as if I had wings, and for nothing in the world would I have finished the journey in a carriage; so I took the absurd course of going down the mountain on foot, as I had come up, whilst Delphine, wiser than I, went down it in a carriage. My little son-in-law followed me, and we did four good leagues on foot without stopping, and almost without noticing it, so much was I kept up by that enthusiasm that you know I feel when I see new sights."

It was seven in the evening when they reached the inn at Saint-Maurice from which they had started out eighteen hours earlier, during which time they had eaten nothing but bread and cheese; yet Madame de Sabran was not too tired to sit down and write a letter

of enormous length to the Chevalier whilst waiting for supper.

" Don't you admire," she says to him, " those hidden resources that lie within us like so many reservoirs, whence on extraordinary occasions our souls can draw the power to do all they will with our feeble bodies ? "

Some weeks after this she set off on a still stranger expedition.

" I feel so gay and energetic that I am going to undertake a little journey to please my children, who do with me as they like, and which will be the funniest journey in the world. It is a pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de Liesse, in which my little devotee is very much interested, for she has read in certain old chronicles that queens went there to find out the secret for having children, and, in spite of her splendid youth and all her husband's love, she thinks this resource is necessary because, after three months of marriage, she is not yet expecting a child. This folly has amused us all very much. . . ."

It was arranged that they were to make the journey like real pilgrims, on foot, braving the weather, whatever it might be. " Those who see us pass will take us for great sinners or for great saints. The truth is that I am quite a lunatic to lend myself, at my age, to such a wild idea."

On the morning of a mild November day the strange cavalcade set forth at eight o'clock from Anizy—Madame de Sabran, Armand and Delphine de Custine, Elzéar, his tutor, a manservant and a maid, followed by a donkey carrying their luggage. Soon after they had started a storm of wind and rain arose which soaked them to the skin ; but, nothing daunted, they trudged on to Laon, where they spent the night. Next day they reached Liesse, and there Delphine attended mass and visited the statue of the Holy Virgin around whose neck countless gold and silver hearts were hung —the offerings of the pilgrims. Delphine did not in-

voke her aid in vain, for ten months later a little son was born to her, whom she named Gaston.

Madame de Sabran returned to Paris in the autumn to find the political crisis more than ever acute. In July Calonne had taken flight. Of all the court party, Calonne was no doubt the most to blame for the state of the finances; it was his frivolity that had checked the progress of reforms, it was he who had encouraged the young queen to spend more than the resources of the privy purse allowed, and now at last the king understood the disaster towards which this irresponsible minister was leading him. Boufflers had always been illusioned on the subject of Calonne, and had shown him a friendship that Madame de Sabran declared he was far from returning; she herself distrusted him, and had written with unfeigned relief to tell Boufflers of his departure,[1] yet even she failed to realize that the state of affairs was anything but an interesting subject for conversation. A few days after the flight of Calonne she was at a supper-party at the Comtesse Diane de Polignac's, where the whole of society was assembled. "We spent a very pleasant evening, talking, laughing, and discussing politics."

They talked of the Parliament that was growing more than ever insolent, of the king who attempted to oppose it, of the bankruptcy that lay possibly before them all.

"This," Madame de Sabran admits, "I should mind, for I begin to feel, as I grow old, that money is a good thing. Nevertheless, my child, I would give everything I possess to live, grow old, and die with you—with the certainty that you would never leave me any more; above all, that I should never hear again those cruel farewells that put my soul and body on the rack, and each time take ten years off my life. What are all the riches of this world compared with that close union of two souls made for one another, that

[1] Entry of July 12, 1787.

purify each other in the fire of love, as gold is purified in the crucible ? What strength and courage this gives one to face the troubles of life ! How easy to do without everything when one already has everything ! Love is the philosopher's stone, but there are very few adepts." (Qu'est-ce que tous les biens de ce monde, en comparaison de cette union intime de deux âmes qui se sont formées l'une pour l'autre, et qui s'épurent mutuellement aux feux de l'amour comme l'or dans le creuset ? Combien l'on a de force et de courage pour tenir tête à toutes les peines de la vie ! qu'il est facile de se passer de tout quand on possède tout ! L'amour est la pierre philosophale, mais il y a bien peu d'adeptes.)

If Madame de Sabran allowed herself at times to be carried away by the gaiety of the Polignacs' circle she did not blind herself to the intrigues that prevailed there, and a month later she wrote to tell Boufflers with delight of the new reforms that deprived certain designing people of the power to enrich themselves at the expense of the nation and to the detriment of the king. " The king," she writes, " has just made reforms very distressing to private people but very satisfactory for the public." The royal household was to be reduced, and amongst other court officials that were to be done away with was the Duchesse de Polignac's lover, the Comte de Vaudreuil, who found himself deprived of his post as Grand Falconer. " What an upheaval ! On what can one count in this world ? . . . What thoughts this gives rise to ! How it should cure one of a mania for the Court, and the torments one endures in one's youth only to lay up for oneself a miserable life in one's old age ! For it is certainly much more difficult to do without honours and riches when one has had them than when one has never known them."

Her chief anxiety was for the king—the king, of whose goodness to the people she speaks so often.

Already in this year of 1787 the royal authority was being slowly but steadily undermined. " The king

has held a ' bed of justice ' at Versailles," Madame de Sabran goes on to say in the same letter, and she adds that, when the new edicts were passed and the news was called out in the streets of Paris, " they did not dare to say, ' Edicts of the king ! ' because the Parliament had forbidden it, so they cried, ' Voilà du nouveau donné tout à l'heure ! ' All this is very distressing to a good citizeness like myself, who dearly loves her king and her country with all her heart, and seriously, it is very disquieting. This is a moment of violent crisis, and it is to be feared that, amidst all this hubbub, the Parliament will set the four corners of the kingdom in a blaze. You are more at peace in your other world in the midst of lions and tigers, for they are lambs compared to our ' gentlemen.' "

In the month of November the Chevalier de Boufflers started home for the last time from Senegal. Madame de Sabran awaited his return with all the agony of suspense she had endured at the end of his first voyage. It was her destiny never to find peace of mind in this love of hers ; still, after ten years, she doubted the Chevalier's power of constancy, dreaded that the day might come when he would break the tie that in her heart she regarded as a sin.

Some women can sin gaily ; others, for whom passion proves too strong, sin in the bitterness of their hearts —to them the primrose path is a path of thorns. Even in that old France that we are accustomed to regard as frankly pagan in its morality, there were women to whom the loss of their virtue was a matter for repentance in dust and ashes. If there were Montespans and Pompadours, there were also la Vallières and de Maillys.[1]

[1] It is told of Madame de Mailly, the woman who first led Louis XV into sin, that, after she had left the splendours of Versailles, she spent the rest of her days in prayer and humility. One day, as she entered the church of Saint-Sulpice to pray, a man in the crowd called her by an insulting name. " Ah ! sir," she said, turning her lovely face gently towards him ; " since you know me, have pity and pray God for me ! "

So Madame de Sabran, *grande amoureuse* that she was, had given up everything for love, yet there were moments when she looked on this *liaison* as a sin, moments when she felt as she describes in the words she wrote to the Chevalier this November, which tell so vividly the tortures of her soul. She begins on a note of mocking tenderness with a laughing picture of their old age together, of the Chevalier grown querulous and gouty refusing the remedies she offers him, furious at her efforts to soothe him, yawning at her efforts to amuse him. Then suddenly she breaks into this passionate lament:

"Oh vanity of vanities! all is vanity except loving and serving you. . . . You are my God; I know no other! If I had suffered for the Other the thousandth part of what I have suffered for you I should be sure of Paradise and the martyr's palm. I have chosen ill, no doubt, since I bound myself to a fickle and capricious master who cannot see in the depths of my heart all the love I have for him, nor can find the like measure in his own, and whose reward is to leave me to my weakness just when I most need support and consolation. But the fault is that of the gods who created me so foolish, and gave me a heart only made for loving you. Good-bye, dear, very dear tyrant of my life, such is my madness that I prefer all the grief you cause me to all the pleasures I might have in this world and the next. Yes, I love you as no one has ever loved—so much that I am astounded at myself."

(O vanité des vanités! tout n'est que vanité, hors t'aimer et te servir. Salomon dit mieux que cela; mais tu es mon dieu, je n'en connais point d'autre. Si j'avais souffert pour l'autre la millième partie de ce que j'ai souffert pour toi, je serais sûre d'être en paradis avec la palme du martyre. J'ai mal choisi sans doute, puisque je me suis attachée à un maître léger, capricieux, qui ne peut voir au fond de mon cœur toute la tendresse que j'ai pour lui, ni n'en peut trouver la mesure dans le sien, et dont la récompense est de m'abandonner à toute ma faiblesse dans le

moment où j'aurais le plus besoin d'appui et de consolation. Mais la faute est aux dieux, qui me créèrent si folle et me donnèrent un cœur fait uniquement pour t'aimer. Adieu, cher et bien cher tyran de mes jours ; ma folie est telle que je préfère les peines que tu me causes à tous les plaisirs qu'on peut goûter dans ce monde et dans l'autre. Oui, je t'aime comme on n'aima jamais, au point de m'en étonner moi-même.)

For more than six weeks she waited in Paris for the news of his return ; it was not till December 29 that she heard at last he had disembarked at La Rochelle. From the ship he had written gaily to his sister, announcing his arrival :

" Listen, my Boisgelin ; I arrive Tuesday evening in the vessel of a corsair who was shipwrecked and only saved himself. I know that I have in Paris neither shirt nor powder nor pommade nor carriage nor horses nor money nor credit. Arrange that I may find everything that I shall need ; borrow two or three shirts with lace ruffles. I think I have some coats, so I shall not want your dresses—all the rest will get on as best it can. . . ."

He had reached land safely—in a few days he would be in Paris, and the last long parting over. The joy and the suspense were almost more than Madame de Sabran could bear. " If I die now, what matter, since I can die in your arms ! . . ."

Another day passed, the last day of the year, and still he was not here. " The year ends without you and the next begins. I had hoped that you would have arranged to be here and the first to come and wish that I may find it happy ; but I must give this up and wait with impatience in the most cruel uncertainty, and this is the hardest of all to bear."

Even as she wrote he was on his way to her. Next day, the first day of the New Year, she was in his arms. The long wait was over, they were together again, with no further partings in prospect. What was this new year to bring them ?

BOOK III

THE REVOLUTION

CHAPTER I

MUTTERINGS OF THE STORM

THE Chevalier de Boufflers, on his return to Paris in January 1788, found, as Madame de Sabran had described, " une fermentation épouvantable dans tous les esprits "; but, with his habitual sanguineness, he regarded this merely as a progressive symptom, the herald of that golden age for which they had all been waiting. By way of furthering the cause of liberty, he now embarked on a crusade in the *salons* in the interests of the oppressed negroes of West Africa ; at the Hôtel de Rochefoucauld, at the Duchesse d'Enville's, and, above all, in the *salon* of Madame de Staël, who had become one of his greatest friends, Boufflers soon became known as the leading " négrophile " of his day. There were many others of his world who joined with him in his detestation of the Slave-trade, and these " gentilshommes négrophiles," as they were called, formed themselves into a club which met at the Hôtel de Massiac. Amongst the members was to be found the Chevalier de Mauduis, who specialized on behalf of the negroes of Saint-Domingo—by whom he was murdered a few years later. On the surface the life of Paris continued much as usual, and we read of a brilliant fête given this summer by the old Duc de Nivernais at Saint-Ouen in honour of Prince Henry of Prussia, now in France for the second time. One golden summer's day a stream

of carriages of glass and gilded coaches, of gay gallants on horseback, were to be seen making their way along the road from Paris to the duke's magnificent castle on the banks of the Seine. All the different worlds of Paris—artists, poets, authors, distinguished soldiers, whom the duke had loved to gather round him in the Rue de Tournon—were represented at this entertainment, of which the *pièce de résistance* was a *proverbe* entitled "Une hirondelle ne fait pas le printemps," composed by the Duc de Nivernais and the Chevalier de Boufflers in honour of the prince. Madame de Sabran, whom the prince admired more than any woman in France, was one of the principal guests, whilst Boufflers, helping the duke to do the honours of Saint-Ouen, had, for the day, laid political reforms aside and thrown himself into the rôle that twenty years earlier had made him the rage of Paris. To-day, for the last time, we see him as the brilliant Chevalier with his ready wit, his sparkling *bons mots*, and his infectious gaiety; to-day, for the last time, we see them all—these people whose fortunes we have followed through the last years of the monarchy—Madame de Sabran happy with her lover, Delphine and her young husband, the dear old duke with his life-long friend, the Maréchale de Mirepoix—gracious, gay, and smiling, as they wander over the smooth lawns of the château and watch the silver line of the Seine wandering away to the distance, all heedless of the coming storm.[1]

Over their heads the clouds are gathering, from the distance comes the roll of drums. The pastoral comedy is ended, and the tragedy is about to begin.

In reading descriptions of France just before the Revolution it is curious to notice the resemblance to our own country before the great war. There were the same forces at work in the nation—irresponsible

[1] For a description of this fête see "Le Duc de Nivernais," by Lucien Perey.

politicians stirring up class hatred and attacking the mild ruling caste of their own land, whilst fawning at the feet of foreign autocrats; middle-class writers showing up the sins of society, yet craving for the favours of the great; disappointed women of society proclaiming themselves Socialists, and noble lords striving to win popularity with the mob by disparagement of their own kind. There were prophets of all kinds of creeds—of free love, of the simple life; there was the same talk of equality, of pacificism, of universal brotherhood that our social reformers of to-day propound with all the air of a discovery. Above all, there was the same spirit of unreasoning optimism, an optimism founded on no sane consciousness of good work accomplished, of wise measures adopted that should in time bear fruit, but an optimism inspired by a wild enthusiasm for untried schemes, by a belief in a coming millennium when, as if by magic, all men would suddenly become free and happy and all the inequalities of fate would vanish. Everything, these optimists decided, must be changed, and changed immediately; for reforms that take time to effect—the only reforms that last—they had no sympathy. The happiness of the human race they believed, as Socialists believe to-day, was simply a matter of just legislation. The idler, the drunkard, and the wastrel should all share the good things of life equally with the man of intellect, with the sober, and the laborious. Had not Rousseau declared that all men were born equal? It must, therefore, be the fault of the system if the idler idled, if the drunkard drank, and the wastrel squandered his substance. Change the system, and the human race would automatically readjust itself to the benevolent scheme of nature.

For, of course, human nature was fundamentally *good*—above all, that portion of the race known as "the People." Of this fact, as Taine has pointed out, all these visionaries were firmly convinced, as are those of

to-day who invariably take it for granted that the man of the people has only to have a thing explained to him for him to see it, his duty pointed out to him for him to do it.

This being so, a system of legislation for human beings should be as simple as cultivating a field of potatoes; one has only to provide the right soil, the right manure, the right attention, and—given a favourable season—a perfect crop should ensue. One allows for no vagaries in individual potatoes, and the Socialist, in drafting schemes for reform, allows for none in human beings, but proceeds with the calm assurance of the market-gardener making his plans for the welfare of his crops. At this rate the millennial age should be easy of attainment. So thought the optimists of 1788 when they looked forward to the future.

The Chevalier de Boufflers, though infinitely saner, and with a sounder substratum of common sense than most of his contemporaries, was no less an optimist than they were. True, his optimism was founded on practical schemes for reform, yet he too was inclined to believe that nothing short of "a revolution" could bring them about. "J'ai toujours eu la fantaisie des révolutions!" he had written nearly twenty years earlier, and still to his mind the idea of a revolution presented little that was alarming. "We were all novices," said the Comte de Vaudreuil, looking back on this period; "we had never seen any revolutions. It is very easy to think of putting up embankments the day after a flood, but who thinks of it the day before?"

The Comte de Vaudreuil, says his biographer, Monsieur Pingaud, "owed all that he was to the Court, but no sooner had he thrown off, like a gala dress, this artificial existence than he became again a man of nature, and indulged in wonderful dreams of the future, or rather, aided by the imagination of others, looked back to the day of primitive equality and the golden age."

These words exactly describe the attitude of those

gentilshommes démocrates who at the beginning of the Revolution included, besides the Chevalier de Boufflers and the Comte de Vaudreuil, such men as the Ducs de Rochefoucauld and d'Aiguillon, the Marquis de Mirabeau, Lafayette, Charles and Mathieu de Lameth, the Comte de Virieu, the brothers Trudaine, the General Beauharnais and the de Custines. "Then, as now," Monsieur Gustave le Bon truly remarks, "it was amongst those most favoured by fortune that the most ardent reformers were to be found."

Nor were the nobility, as a whole, opposed to progress and reform. This point must be emphasized, at the cost of a digression, if Madame de Sabran's attitude towards the Revolution is to be understood, for otherwise her views, so remarkable for their insight, might appear to be those of an obstructionist.

Now at this date the great majority of the nobles were neither rich nor powerful; out of about a thousand really old families, says the Duc de Levis, "only two or three hundred had escaped the misfortunes of indigence." In Paris and in all the large towns, the commercial section of society was the wealthiest, and it was these *nouveaux riches* and the recently ennobled who were the most tenacious of their newly acquired privileges. Amongst the old nobility who had retained their wealth the spirit of philanthropy had, as we have seen, made great progress, and there were many *grands seigneurs* who cared for the welfare of the dwellers on their lands. Boufflers' uncle, the Prince de Beauvau, gave away large sums and himself visited the poor in their homes[1]; the Prince de Condé was adored by the people of Chantilly[2]; the Duc de Penthièvre was known as the "father of the poor," and with his equerry Florian devoted his time to seeking out cases of distress and relieving them,[3] whilst his

[1] "Mémoires du Prince de Beauvau," p. 137.
[2] "Mémoires de Madame Vigée le Brun," p 97.
[3] "La Princesse de Lamballe," by M. de Lescure.

daughter-in-law, the Princesse de Lamballe, was known as the " good angel " on his estates. Writing of the Duc de Liancourt, Lacretelle says : " The thought of the poor, of prisoners, and the sick was the first to occupy this happy man," and Arthur Young confirms this statement in an enthusiastic description of the schools and industries established by the duke.[1]

" In 1789," says Taine, " the upper class was not unworthy [of power] . . . never had the aristocracy been more liberal, more humane, more in sympathy with useful reforms. . . . I have read in the original many hundreds of inquiries in manuscript, and I have nearly always admired the humanity of the nobles, their forbearance, and their horror of bloodshed. Not only many have hearts and all have honour, but, having been brought up on the philosophy of the eighteenth century, they are gentle and feeling—violence is repugnant to them." This verdict is confirmed by Burke, who travelled in France just before the Revolution : " All this violent cry against the nobility I take to be a mere work of art." And again : " I found your nobility, for the greater part, composed of men of high spirit, and of a delicate sense of honour. . . . As to their behaviour to the inferior classes, they appeared to me to comport themselves towards them with good-nature, and with something more nearly approaching to familiarity, than is generally practised with us in the intercourse between the higher and lower ranks of life. To strike any person, even in the most abject condition, was a thing in a manner unknown, and would be highly disgraceful. Instances of other ill-treatment of the humble part of the community were rare. . . ."

Yet in popular English literature to-day we read of the nobles of France in the time of Louis XVI " beating the peasants like dogs," and entirely indifferent to their sufferings. These strange errors that exist in England

[1] Arthur Young's " Travels in France," p. 83.

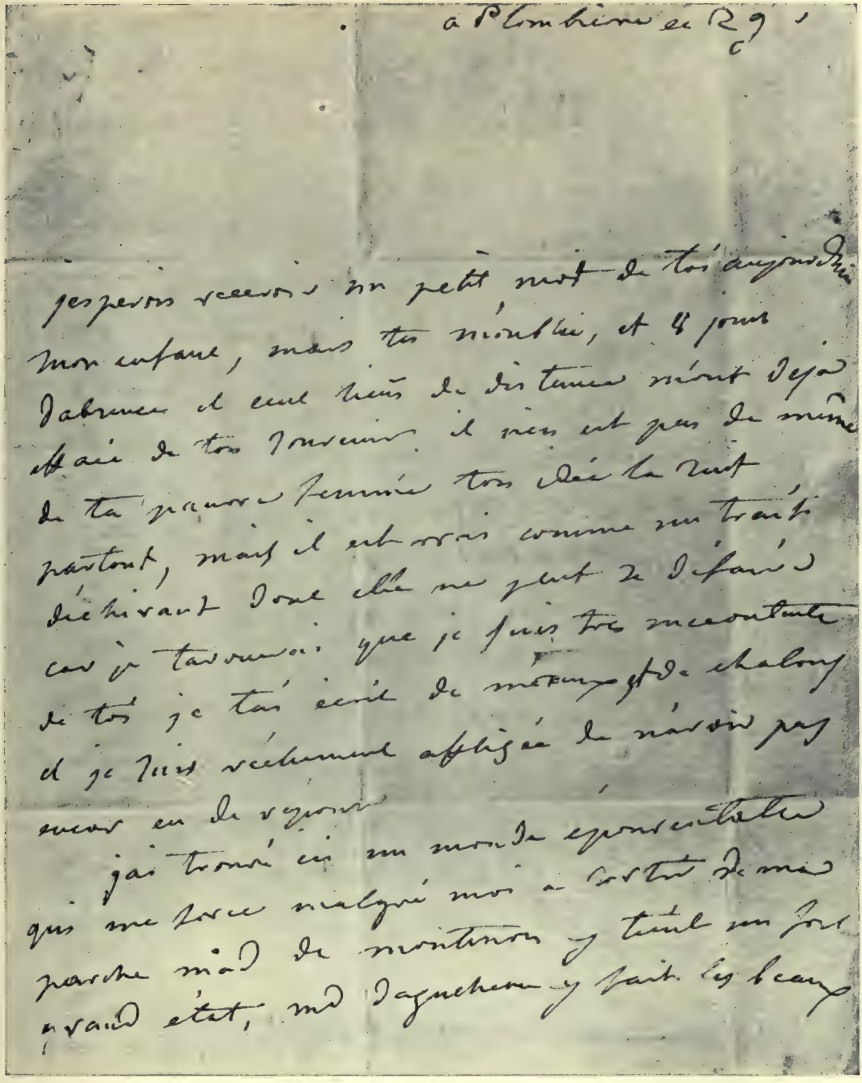
on the subject of the French Revolution are, no doubt, largely attributable to Carlyle; but one has only to compare Carlyle's accounts with contemporary evidence or the writings of reliable French historians in order to discover that his strong democratic bias led him continually into misrepresentations or suppressions of the truth.[1] Thus Arthur Young, whom Carlyle quotes, or rather misquotes, perpetually in support of his theories, was far from being the rabid " anti-aristocrat " Carlyle makes him appear; never once in his accounts of his travels in France does Young give an instance of any act of cruelty on the part of a noble, and the main charge he brings against the nobility was that of absenting themselves from their estates. In La Vendée, le Bocage, Anjou, and Poitou, where the *seigneurs* lived on their lands, the Revolution could make no headway, but it flourished in districts where the landowners left their property in the hands of *intendants* who ground down the people.

Still greater offenders were the *fermiers-généraux*, as an illuminating letter from Madame de Sabran to the Chevalier de Boufflers shows us, and at the same time reveals the attitude of the more enlightened aristocrats towards such oppressions.

Madame de Sabran had stopped one day, on her way to Valenciennes, to visit the ruined château of the Ducs de Guise, and, on going down into the dungeons, found them to be full of prisoners :

" The farmer-generals," she says, " whose way of administering justice is often very unjust, have turned a part of them into prisons in which for months, and perhaps years, they leave unhappy people to groan in misery who have committed no other crime than trying to gather up a few crumbs that fall from their tables. What harm, indeed, can these poor things do to messieurs the farmer-generals, by smuggling a little salt or tobacco so as to have a few sous to exchange

[1] The question of Carlyle's veracity is dealt with more fully in the Appendix, p. 425.



AUTOGRAPH LETTER FROM THE COMTESSE DE SABRAN TO THE CHEVALIER DE BOUFFLERS.

for bread wherewith to feed their wives and children? I was very much distressed on their account, and asked them a hundred different questions so as to find out all about them; amongst others I questioned was a little orphan of fourteen, beautiful as the day, and some good old women, for they are shown no more mercy than the rest. I wrote down their names on my tablets, and to-morrow I mean to write a fine letter to the fat Seigneur Varanchan [1] in the hope of touching his heart and obtaining their pardon. If he refuses I shall fall out with him, as with a man who has neither heart nor mind."

Then, as always, the worst oppressors of the poor were the men who sprang from their own class or the one immediately above them. The "gros Seigneur Varanchan" was not an aristocrat, nor were the agents and bailiffs of the nobles who often lined their pockets with money wrung from the peasants on their employers' estates. "The proprietors of fiefs and of manorial rights," the revolutionary Duc d'Aiguillon stated to the National Assembly, "are only very seldom guilty of the excesses about which their vassals complain; but their men of business are often without pity."

Thus, in the case of the Duc de Nivernais, kindest and best of men, a complaint was sent up to Parliament with regard to the state of affairs existing on his estates in Nevers; but the whole cause of the trouble was the "unbelievable harshness" of his agents, and an appeal was made to the duke himself, whose "douces vertus," says the Comte de Beugnot, "were a contrast to the acerbity of his *intendants*." [2]

From the first the Duc de Nivernais had thrown himself into the movement for reform. Though now seventy-two, and very infirm, he had taken his place the year before in the Assembly of Notables, leaving his peaceful retreat at Saint-Ouen in order to be able to concentrate all his energies on his work.

[1] I have looked in vain for the name of Seigneur Varanchan amongst the farmer-generals condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal!

[2] "Mémoires du Comte de Beugnot," p. 22.

The duke was what might be called a "progressive Conservative," nor is this the contradiction in terms it may appear. "I ask," he wrote to the Assembly, "that the diseases of the old political constitution should be cured by a treatment and remedies suited not only to the disease, but to the temperament. . . ." He realized the immense caution with which the cure must be applied, and the folly of putting into practice Utopian schemes that worked splendidly on paper, but were useless when applied to human beings:

"It is easy to draft on paper great changes, great innovations, for the paper offers no resistance. It is a great deal easier to write books than to govern men, to make the plan of a new administration than to uphold an old administration without deviating from the forms of which it is made up and yet without leaving in existence the abuses that have found their way into it."

There was so much in this old France that was worth preserving! The prestige of a monarchy that for fourteen hundred years had held unbroken sway; the passionate loyalty of a romantic nation for its king; the splendour of a Court that for centuries had formed the centre of the world's civilization; the traditions of an old nobility whose reputation for wit and charm and learning had made it the admiration of the world.

In order to ensure the liberty and well-being of the people, was it necessary that all these things should be swept away? The Duc de Nivernais did not think so, nor did Madame de Sabran, nor have the sanest brains of posterity judged it necessary. It was not necessary in our own country.

It must be remembered that at this date the condition of the poor in every country was far from enviable, and the administration of justice, as we understand it, was almost in its infancy. Even in England, which was regarded as the freest country in the world, men at this period were hanged for stealing a sheep, transported

for life for trifling offences, lunatics were treated as criminals, and life in general was conducted with a harshness that we of a humaner age can scarcely imagine. We needed, however, no revolution, but merely an increase of civilization to put an end to these brutalities. Our reforms came, as the most lasting reforms will always come, from the very class that Socialism seeks to destroy ; they originated, not in the heated brains of demagogues, but in the calm intellects of men who had nothing themselves to gain by their introduction.

Such were the men who composed the disinterested band of *gentilshommes démocrates* in 1788, and such was the spirit that inspired the nobility to assemble at the Louvre on December 20 of this year, and address the king stating their intention of renouncing their pecuniary privileges—a resolution they carried out seven months later.

It was still in the *salons* that revolutionary doctrines were mainly propagated. There were *salons* of all shades of opinion—*salons* like Madame de Staël's that were enlightened and progressive, like the Duchesse de Coigny's that talked petty treason, others that openly clamoured for democracy.

Madame de Sabran's *salon* was the most peaceful of the reactionary centres—the meeting-place of those who desired reformation but not revolution. With growing anxiety she saw one after another of her circle falling a victim to the prevailing spirit of unrest. Far from blind herself to the abuses of the old régime, she nevertheless realized that a corrupt system such as had existed under Louis XV could not be remodelled in a moment. Passionately loyal to Louis XVI, she understood the immense difficulty of the task with which he had been confronted on his accession. "Only great genius," says de Tocqueville, "can save a prince who undertakes to relieve his people after a long period of oppression." In other words, it is easy to keep a people down

under an iron heel, but it needed a greater man than Louis XVI to lift the iron heel without causing a disastrous upheaval. Yet this was precisely what the unhappy king had, from the beginning of his reign, endeavoured to do. In Turgot he believed rightly that he had found a minister with the interests of the people at heart. " Only you and I, Monsieur Turgot," he had said thirteen years earlier, " really love the people." But the people, misled by agitators, had insisted on the dismissal of Turgot and clamoured for Necker.[1]

In spite of these discouragements, Louis XVI had nevertheless accomplished much. More reforms had already been effected during the fourteen years of his reign than in the whole century preceding it. Torture had been abolished, the prison system reformed, the right of *mainmorte* suppressed, *lettres de cachet* had been, from the moment of his accession, reduced to nearly nothing. At every opportunity the king had shown himself in sympathy with schemes for the greater happiness of his people.

The return of Necker at the end of the summer was hailed with joy by that portion of the nation who hoped for a peaceful settlement of the financial crisis. In their opinion the brain of the Genevese banker was all that was needed to deal with the grave problem of the deficit, which, as we have already seen, was due largely to the expenses incurred by France in the American War.

Madame de Sabran was amongst the sanguine people who hoped for great things from the advent of Necker :

" My politics are in accord with the general opinion, and I rejoice to see the only man capable of putting France to rights again, of seconding the excellent intentions of our good king, and of enabling him to enjoy the happiness he deserves in restoring hope and tranquillity to his people. A less powerful brain than that of Monsieur Necker might shrink from so great a task

[1] See Appendix, p. 426.

of which the threads are so entangled that it will take him some time to find his way amongst them. But it seems that this is not beyond his powers, and if he does not succeed we must believe that it is impossible. Madame de Staël must be intoxicated with delight. . . . ."

The Chevalier de Boufflers was no less convinced that all would now be well. On December 9 he was received as a member of the Académie, an event that created so great a sensation in Paris that free fights took place in the doorways to gain admittance, and the Swiss guards, armed with halberds, were obliged to separate the combatants. His speech on his reception was of immense length, and would certainly tax the patience of the modern mind, but in those unhurried days long periods were *de rigueur*, and no one shared the Marquise de Boufflers' opinion that " to be long-winded is absurd." The Chevalier's remarks on " clearness in style " were listened to with rapture by his audience, but, excellent as these are, the chief interest of the discourse lies to us in the political views it expresses, the pathetic hopefulness displayed towards the coming " regeneration." Beginning with a description of the West African natives still awaiting the enlightenment of civilization, he ends by hailing the dawn of liberty in France, the new era inaugurated by the king in recalling Necker, and in declaring his intention of summoning the States-General " as the good father of a family would call advisers round him to consult on the welfare of his children.

" Such profound goodness of heart," he cries, " such noble desires, such generous designs will never fail; he will see them repaid with greater glory than a king has ever acquired before, by greater happiness than a king has ever given." The monarchy of France, Boufflers believes, is destined to rise like a phœnix above transitory disturbances, to prove itself " the most glorious and most lasting of monarchies on the eve of regeneration."

Tragic illusionment shared by too many generous

minds at this critical moment, shared even by the king himself, who from the first lent his support to the work of reformation and by following the advice of Necker " put himself at the head of a conspiracy against the monarchy which he sacrificed in the hope of making his subjects happier." [1] The trouble with them all, from the king downwards, was that they had too rudimentary ideas of organization. All were in earnest, but none knew precisely how to set to work. Many were visionaries—fired by the example of ancient Greece and Rome, they saw themselves, as Lacretelle describes, " in the midst of Athenians of the time of Pericles and Plato . . . enlightened by a philosophy that shone not only for one brilliant city, but for the whole human race." " I sighed when I thought of Athens," wrote Madame Roland, " there as well I could have admired the fine arts, without being grieved by the sight of despotism. I walked in imagination in Greece, I watched the Olympic games, and I pitied myself for being French."

The same obsession had taken hold of the mind of the Chevalier de Boufflers. Ten years earlier he had written the words : " I was born for other times, other places, other laws. I feel that in Athens, or even in Sparta, I should have been worth something." In his second speech at the Académie the year after his reception, we shall see to what an extent this conviction had developed in his mind. Unfortunately, like most of his contemporaries, he did not follow the precept enforced by the greatest among the philosophers he admired so passionately, the precept : *Γνῶθι σεαυτόν* (Know thyself!). He imagined, as they each imagined, that he was born for great events, to take part in tremendous crises, whilst in reality he possessed only the gifts that could prove effectual in a time of law and order. As a member of the British House of Commons proposing reforms to a calm and essentially law-abiding nation he would have been the right man in the right

[1] " Souvenirs et portraits," by the Duc de Levis, p. 53.

place, but in France of 1788 polished oratory was little in demand outside the precincts of the Académie.

Boufflers' friends, however, were convinced of his talents as a politician, and the Comte de Ségur, writing from St. Petersburg to congratulate him on his speech, urges him to lose no time in embarking on a political career instead of returning to the army :

" The Revolution now taking place in France offers you a wider field and one more worthy of your celebrity. . . . This is the moment when you ought to shine, when your enemies should be silent, and your friends should congratulate you. . . ."

At the time this letter was written Boufflers had already taken his place in the Parliament and his great desire was now to be elected a member of the States-General that were to meet the following spring for the first time in 175 years and redress all the wrongs from which France was suffering. With this object he went to Lorraine and offered himself to represent the *noblesse* as member for Nancy. In spite of the serious nature of his mission Boufflers sets about it with characteristic light-heartedness ; he writes to his sister, whom he apostrophizes as " my obelisk, my Egyptian pyramid ! " to thank her for the efforts she has made on behalf of his election and ends the letter quite in his old style : " I will not kiss the bishop for you, as you appear to ask me, because he has a heavy cold, but I will tell him that you love him well, and that will be as good as a large stick of *pâte de guimauve* to him. Good-bye, my dear girl ; I love you from end to end, and that is a long way, even without your coiffure." At last, in April, just a month before the opening of the States-General, he is able to write and announce to her the good news of his election : " Enfin, ma chère enfant, ils m'ont élu ! "

Boufflers was enchanted, and, for all his surface gaiety, took his political duties very seriously. All through his varied life, through even the wildest years of his irre-

sponsible youth, ideals of liberty and justice had fired his imagination ; one day, he had always told himself, he would be able to do great things for humanity, strike some great blow for freedom, and this hope had inspired all the adventures through which he had passed. So it had been when, as an impulsive boy, he had rushed to the scene of Paoli's revolution in Corsica, later to the rescue of the oppressed Poles, and when he had striven in Senegal to better the conditions of the negroes. The Revolution that was beginning in France seemed to him now the great event to which all these minor efforts had been leading up ; the chance for which he had been waiting had come at last. His own country was to be regenerated, and he was to do his share in the splendid work ! What wonder that the Chevalier glowed with pride and enthusiasm ?

But Madame de Sabran, whilst valiantly endeavouring not to damp Boufflers' ardour, was unable to share his optimism with regard to the future. The growing disturbances in Paris had shaken her faith in Necker, and from the first she distrusted Mirabeau, whom she describes as " this modern Catilina." " So let us arm ourselves with courage," she writes to Boufflers at this moment ; " the storm will soon burst over us. Let Versailles and the good city of Paris beware ! There have been certain mutterings the last few days that seem like the precursors of great events."

Both Madame de Sabran and the Duc de Nivernais looked forward with foreboding to the opening of the States-General. The old duke had resolutely opposed the convocation of this heterogeneous assembly, with its ill-chosen representatives of the people—many of them debased hirelings of the Duc d'Orléans—outnumbering the representatives of both the nobility and clergy put together. To give power into the hands of such men would be, the duke declared, like placing a loaded gun in the hands of a child.

By the greater part of the community, however, the

meeting of the States-General was hailed with rapture as the beginning of the millennial age, and the Marquis de Créquy, in some amusing verses, expressed the popular feeling on the subject:

" Enfin, les beaux jours de la France
Ont ranimé notre espérance
Et vont apaiser tous nos maux :
Vivent les États-Généraux !
Le soleil ne luit pas encore ;
Mais déjà la brillante aurore
S'apprête à dorer nos coteaux,
Vivent les États-Généraux !

" Plus de Clergé, plus de Noblesse,
Plus de Baron, plus de Duchesse,
Nous allons tous être égaux ;
Vivent les États-Généraux !
Chacun gardera son hommage
Pour les vertus et le courage
Des Lameth et des Mirabeaux,
Vivent les États-Généraux !

" Le vigneron chez un Ministre,
Chez Maman, comme chez un cuistre,
Viendra sans quitter ses sabots ;
Vivent les États-Généraux !
Et bientôt la poissarde, assise
A la table de la Marquise,
Y reverra ses maquereaux ;
Vivent les États-Généraux !

" Toutes les femmes seront belles,
Tous les époux seront fidèles,
Tous les amis francs et loyaux ;
Vivent les États-Généraux !
Les mœurs vont régner dans nos villes,
La paix dans nos districtes dociles,
La vérité dans nos journaux :
Vivent les États-Généraux !

" Plus de commis, plus de gabelles,
Plus de procès ni de querelles,
Plus de misère et plus d'impôts ;
Vivent les États-Généraux !
Chacun vivra dans l'abondance,
Chacun pourra faire bombance,
Ah ! que de poules dans les pots !
Vivent les États-Généraux ! "

The great day, May 4, dawned calm and serene and the sun shone down from a cloudless sky on the last march-past of the representatives of France's ancient splendour.

What must have been the feelings of Madame de Sabran as she looked on at the procession? Unfortunately, we have no record, for at this moment a break occurs in the correspondence; but it is almost certain that she was at Versailles on that memorable day, the first day of the Revolution, in which all those belonging to her played prominent parts. For not only was the Chevalier elected to represent the nobility for Nancy, but also the *beau-père*, General de Custine, was returned as member for Metz, whilst his son-in-law, the Marquis de Dreux-Brézé, was master of the ceremonies. Madame de Sabran must, therefore, inevitably have taken her place amongst the great ladies who watched with mingled emotions the long procession wending its way to the church of Saint Louis to ask the blessing of God on their enterprise—God, who as "the first aristocrat,"[1] was the first to be dethroned. On they came, that dazzling throng of king and nobles, through the gaily decorated streets hung with ancient tapestries, crowded with merry-makers, with women in their brightest dresses grouped on balconies and housetops, with bands playing and trumpets blowing; Louis XVI, trudging heavily, as was his wont, his homely face lit up in sympathy with the rejoicings of his people; the queen at his side, sad but majestic.

I think that, in looking at these two, the heart of Madame de Sabran must have been filled with an immense pity. She must have seen the king in all his unconscious pathos, with his simple trust in the good-will of his people, his ardent desire to make them happy, yet with his total inability to strike the heroic attitude that would win the applause of the multitude. Even

[1] "Dieu, comme étant le premier aristocrate, en souffrit tout de suite."—THE PRINCE DE LIGNE.

LES ÉTATS GÉNÉRAUX.

at this supreme moment, in his royal attire, with the order of the *cordon bleu* and flashing diamonds, he could not look kingly ; his tragedy was that of a noble soul pent in a common body, expressed by a halting mind.

The queen, for all her dignity, was no less pathetic. As Madame de Sabran's eyes rested on her stately figure she must have seen in her the mother rather than the queen. Hitherto it had always been in the matter of their children that these two women, so intellectually apart, had met and sympathized, and to-day the gentle Eléonore realized, perhaps, more vividly than any one else in that gay crowd the agony that lay behind the queen's efforts to smile and that flashed out uncontrollably at one moment as she raised her eyes to the balcony where lay a dying child—the little Dauphin whose birth had been hailed with the wildest acclamations, only eight years ago, by the nation that now seemed hardly to notice that he was passing from the world. " A la mort de mon pauvre cher dauphin," the queen wrote sadly a year later, " la nation n'a pas seulement eu l'air de s'en apercevoir."

In front of the king and queen came the glittering throng of the nobility, two hundred and seventy loyal gentlemen of France, who, true to their traditions, had come forward in their country's hour of need to do battle this time with no foreign foe, but to aid the cause of liberty. In solemn procession they walked past, these bearers of ancient names, with the May sun shining on their gold-embroidered tunics of black cloth, on the glossy plumes of their black hats, on the lace of their ruffles and the diamond buckles flashing on their shoes. Amongst them walked the fiery general, Adam Philippe, Comte de Custine, and there, too, Stanislas de Boufflers, no longer, for all his gallant attire, the gay Chevalier, but an earnest deputy, his mocking mouth set firmly, his laughing eyes grown stern with purpose as he entered on his new rôle—defender of the rights of the people.

But the spectacle that to-day most thrilled the multitude was that far larger contingent heading the procession—the six hundred black-clad figures, unrelieved by golden trappings, the members of the Tiers État.

Boufflers' friend, Madame de Staël, looking down at this sinister assemblage from the balcony where she was seated with Madame de Montmorin, the wife of the minister for foreign affairs, could hardly contain her delight. At last the efforts of that great man, her father, had been rewarded—the day of liberty had dawned, the people had come into its own! "Vive Necker!" cry the populace, and the heart of Madame de Staël swells with filial pride.

She turns to Madame de Montmorin with a glowing face:

"Ah! madame, how I rejoice to see this day!"

And, like a sudden cut with cold steel, comes back the strange reply: "Madame, you are wrong to rejoice, for all this will result in great disasters, both for France and for us."

Even the complacent Madame de Staël was startled—a cold shiver ran through her at the words she was destined to remember, one terrible September day, three years later, when she found herself face to face with some of these very people whom to-day was to set free, women drunk with wine and blood, men armed with pikes ready to run through the breast of the daughter of Necker—Necker, whom to-day they hailed as their saviour! That same September day perished the husband of Madame de Montmorin at the hands of the assassins at the Abbaye, whilst she herself lived on to meet death on the scaffold with one of her sons. Her eldest daughter died in prison, her youngest of a broken heart.

So was this strange prophecy terribly fulfilled.

The rejoicings of Madame de Staël were founded on the belief that in the Tiers État were to be seen the

representatives of the people. Unhappily, however, the Tiers État were not representative of the people, but of the *bourgeoisie*; had they included more members of the working class—labour members, as we should say to-day—"the People" might be said to have come into its own; such men, unversed in flowers of rhetoric, could have introduced an element of practical common sense into the Assembly, and have expressed the people's sufferings in plain, unvarnished speech. But this was not so; amongst the 621 deputies of the Tiers État were only 40 members of the working class; the rest were men of letters, merchants, business men, but above all, *lawyers*—no less than 360 small solicitors with minds attuned to the tortuous verbiage of their profession who proceeded to bring the same methods to bear on affairs of State. Between the aristocracy and the people, as the Economists had seen, there is a certain natural affinity, but between the people and such men as these, little real sympathy existed. "Ils sont au fond," says Monsieur Louis Madelin, "tout ce qu'il y a de moins démocrates, n'éprouvant pour le petit peuple qu'un mépris mêlé de peur." So, if we examine the records of the day we shall find in the utterances of the Tiers État far less feeling for the sufferings of the poor than for their own sufferings at the hands of the aristocracy. As Rivarol expressed it: "It is neither taxes nor *lettres de cachet*, nor all the other abuses of authority; it is not the vexations of *intendants* and the ruinous delays of justice that have most irritated the nation: it is the prejudice of the nobility, against which it has manifested the greatest hatred."[1] It was not the nation, however, but the *bourgeoisie* whose resentment was aroused, whose wounded vanity was manifested at every turn

[1] "Rivarol et la Société Française," by de Lescure, p. 212. Joseph Droz confirms this verdict: "Les privilèges onéreux des premiers ordres froissaient le Tiers État; mais le sentiment qu'il éprouvait était moins la haine que l'envie, et le désir des familles bourgeoises était d'acquérir un jour la noblesse. . . ." ("Le Règne de Louis XVI," vol. i. p. 113).

throughout the Revolution—Mirabeau still smarted from the rebuffs he had received at the hands of society from which his immoralities had made him an outcast; Robespierre could not forgive his position of obscurity on his arrival in Paris[1]; Saint-Just had not forgotten the splendour of a neighbouring noble in his birthplace[2]; Carrier and Marat remembered with irritation having occupied subordinate positions under noble lords[3]; and later, Madame Roland was to wreak her vengeance on the Court at which she had raged to find herself a person of no importance.[4]

After the meeting of the States-General the tide of revolution rose steadily higher. All through the spring riots were continually taking place in Paris and the provinces, led by men of sinister appearance, armed with thick sticks, whose identity remained a mystery. Still more mysterious was the influence that provoked these outbreaks against which the old order seemed powerless to contend. The *bourgeois* lived in dread of these hordes of brigands. To add to the trouble, famine—always a recurring evil during the preceding centuries in France—had returned this year with more than usual severity.

Now, since the famished condition of the people has been made the ground by all pro-revolutionists—notably Carlyle—on which all popular excesses are to be condoned, it is important to understand the real causes of the famine. Primarily it was due to a bad harvest, the result of long drought during the summer of 1788 and of a terrific hailstorm that destroyed the crops for miles round Paris. These disasters were followed by an exceptionally hard winter. There was, therefore,

[1] "La Révolution de France," by Deux Amis de la Liberté, xi. 7.

[2] "Saint-Just s'est senti froissé dans sa vanité, dans sa pauvreté, par l'orgueil et la richesse des ducs de Gesvres, seigneurs de son village, il s'imagine qu'on ne trouve partout que morgue, hauteur et insolence" ("Saint-Just," by E. Fleury, vol. i. p. 60).

[3] "La Révolution française," by Gustave le Bon, p. 73.

[4] See the "Mémoires de Madame Roland."

a real lack of food attributable to no human agency, and which human agency was equally unable to counteract. "In vain private people, princes, noble lords, bishops, chapters, communities, multiplied their alms . . . neither public precautions nor private charities sufficed for so great needs." [1] So much for the heartless aristocracy represented by apologists for the Revolution as entirely indifferent to the sufferings of the poor.

What, then, was further the cause of the famine? According to Arthur Young, the fault lay principally with the corn-laws of Necker. On June 10, 1789, he writes:

"Everything conspires to render the present period in France critical; the want of bread is terrible . . . well-informed persons have assured me that the price is, as usual, much higher than the proportion of the crop demanded, and there would have been no real scarcity if Mr. Necker would have let the corn-trade alone; but his edicts of restriction . . . have operated more to raise the price *than all other causes together*. It appears plain to me that the violent friends of the commons are not displeased at the high price of corn, which seconds their views greatly, and makes any appeal to the common feeling of the people easy and much more to their purpose than if the price were low."

Madame de la Tour du Pin tells us precisely the same thing. "Agitators," she says, "were deliberately stopping supplies being brought into Paris, in order to madden the people by hunger." [2] It was easy to impose on the credulity of the poor, to make them believe that the class they had been taught to hate were the cause of the trouble. The mob do not reason; it did not occur to them to wonder what object the aristocrats could have for depriving them of food; yet the agitators' object in doing so was evident, for it was as much to

[1] "La Révolution," by H. Taine, vol. i. p. 4. Also "L'ancien Régime," by Taine, pp. 43–47.

[2] "Mémoires d'une femme de cinquante ans," vol. i. p. 183. See also Appendix, p. 427.

their interest to irritate the people as it was to the aristocrats' interest to soothe them.

All this, if admitted by pro-revolutionists, would seriously weaken their case both against the monarchy and aristocracy; therefore, it has been deliberately suppressed, and an appeal made to the popular imagination by descriptions of aristocrats driving through the streets in their gilded coaches oblivious to the starving "rats" who creep out of their houses to see them pass.

Yet all the while, if we are to believe the testimony of Arthur Young and others no less reliable, the main cause of the trouble was the Genevese banker who had been called in *by the will of the people* to legislate for their welfare—Necker, whom they had chosen in the place of Turgot, the one man who would have helped them with honesty and intelligence; Necker, whose dismissal filled them later on with the fury that found expression in the riots of the Tuileries and culminated in the storming of the Bastille.

What was really the truth about Necker? At this distance of time who can tell? it is possible he was an honest man, it is almost certain that he was far from wishing to destroy the monarchy, for Necker believed in a monarchy, and even in an aristocracy, which he realized to be a lesser evil than a plutocracy—its inevitable alternative. At the same time he could not resist the temptation that assails all vain men who love the applause of the multitude, of winning popularity by disparaging the ruling classes. Thus, in his treatise on the Corn Trade, written at the time of the Guerre de Farines, he had attacked property and described the rich as devouring the substance of the poor. But now, having used class hatred as a lever with which to stir the people up to discontent, he found himself unable to control their actions. Before the Commons' determination to transform the States-General into the National Assembly, before their open defiance of the king at the Séance Royale, Necker was helpless, and the

aristocrats who had trusted him to save the situation felt that he had failed them.

"Does Monsieur Necker mean to deceive us?" cried the queen, bursting into tears when Necker failed to appear at the Séance Royale on June 23. In the evening of that day the same fear assailed Madame de Sabran.

The Chevalier de Boufflers had come up from Versailles and she saw at once that something unusual had occurred in the Assembly. She waited breathlessly for him to tell her.

The king, he said, had this day made great concessions with regard to taxation, but had refused to abolish at a sweep the feudal rights of the nobility.[1] He had ended his speech with the words: "If I am abandoned by the States-General in the beneficent work of reform I alone will ensure the happiness of my people!"

After this, he had declared the sitting ended, and left the hall followed by the nobility and clergy. But the commons—the Third Estate—remained seated in ominous silence. At this Dreux-Brézé had returned to repeat the king's order: "His Majesty requests the Deputies of the Third Estate to retire!" Whereupon Mirabeau, with rolling eyes, his hideous pock-marked face convulsed with rage, roared back his reply: "Go back and tell your master that we are here by the power of the people, and nothing but the bayonet shall drive us hence!"

Madame de Sabran listened horror-struck. The king insulted, and by the man she most distrusted—Mirabeau! Such were the men with whom, she feared, Boufflers might now throw in his lot by following the example of the minority of the *noblesse* in joining the Tiers État. She saw that this revolutionary fever had taken so deep

[1] Arthur Young considered the King's attitude reasonable: "The propositions are known to all the world; the plan was a good one, much was granted to the people in great and essential points," etc. ("Travels in France," June 23, 1789).

a hold on him that no words of hers could prevail. To all her tears and prayers he answered harshly, and she realized that, in his present frame of mind, to reason with him would be to drive him from her for ever. He left her at last almost in anger—left her alone to her despair. The man she loved, the man for whom she had hoped such great things, was going to play a part unworthy of him! It was more than she could bear. Next day she wrote him this last passionate appeal:

"I was heart-broken, my friend, when parting from you. I saw that my words hardly reached your ears, still less your heart. Yet it is *your* cause that I plead—mine is lost, I know. I grieve; but this is not the moment to speak of that. A greater thought absorbs me—the thought of you, of your honour, of your reputation, of your happiness. For, whatever they may do by making you demean yourself, they will never make you able to endure disgrace. They will never prevent you from minding—shall I say contempt? No, this word can never be pronounced in connection with a great-grandson of the Maréchal de Boufflers—but from minding the natural indignation and distrust inspired by conduct so different from what it ought to be. You could not calmly see yourself regarded as the partisan of Messieurs Target, Mounier, Chapellier, Mirabeau, etc., you would shudder at the thought of sitting beside them, unable to oppose their senseless speeches, their insane and seditious schemes. What would you do, my child, in this abominable Assembly if ever your weakness and your excessive deference to perfidious counsels—dictated in the interests of Monsieur Necker and at your expense—were to carry you away? What would be your humiliation if that party suffered the fate of all parties opposed to justice and reason? They will go, perhaps, so far as to be declared in the eyes of all Europe traitors to their king and country. Then will be seen in its true light, the hypocrisy, the deceit, the perfidy, the infernal threats of this abominable Genevese whose vanity desired the whole of France for his pedestal without the wings of genius to place and maintain him there. And were he even to triumph, are the members

of that good and ancient nobility, devoted from all time to the honour and upholding of the throne and monarchy of France, to share in such a shameful victory? Is this such a one as the Maréchal de Boufflers would have won? What would he have said at such a critical moment, and on which side do you think he would be? Take counsel, my child, from his ashes, cold as they are, rather than from Monsieur du Châtelet,[1] whose ambiguous conduct makes one doubt his honesty and whose latest intrigues have lost him the good opinion he might have won. One trembles at this hour to see in his hands the troops destined for the safety of the king and of private people. It is even said already that they have been won over.... In the name, then, of our first friendship, in the name of your best interests and your peace of mind, consult only your conscience and remember the blood that flows in your veins. Good-bye, my child, good-bye. I could die of terror at the thought that the dearest part of myself could play a part that would make me blush.

"Just as I am closing my letter rumours spread that I can hardly believe. They say that the king has withdrawn his words, that the princes are exiled, also the Archbishop of Paris, and the Duc and Duchesse de Polignac. So there is the Genevese—king of France! But I am none the less determined to say, to whoever will listen, that he is an abominable monster."

But it was not Neeker who aspired to be king of France, as Madame de Sabran before long realized. It was Philippe d'Orléans—the infamous Orléans who hoped, by fermenting popular discontent, to place himself upon the throne.

As in a flash, Madame de Sabran realized the true author of the trouble and burning with indignation she wrote again to the Chevalier warning him on the danger of remaining amongst such associates:

[1] The Duc du Châtelet—"type d'officier noble détraqué par la philosophie," says M. Louis Madelin. Madame de Sabran was perfectly right in her estimate of him. He was imprisoned later on by the Revolutionary Tribunal, but showed himself such a coward that he was taken to task by an "aristocratic" street-walker in the courtyard of the Conciergerie. See "Mémoires du Comte de Beugnot," vol. i. p. 203.

"I love you too much, my friend, to allow myself to be overruled by your reluctance to listen to me. At the risk of displeasing you, at the risk of sending you away from me *altogether*, I shall tell you the truth that is in my heart. I owe it to you. I owe it to myself, and whatever happens I shall at least have no cause to reproach myself. . . . Never was there a moment more critical than this one, for your reputation, for your honour, and perhaps your life. . . . It is not without reason, believe me, that I impart these thoughts to you; they are not chosen at random. Look at all that has happened this month, and at what is happening to-day, and you will end by thinking as I do.

"Monsieur Necker is only a dupe; he has his plan, very likely, but let him beware, for he will soon be sacrificed, and no one will pity him. In this case, and considering the knowledge we have of the character of Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans, of his obstinacy and his abominable principles, what can one expect from such a leader? Where will he lead those who follow him? How long will fortune favour him? . . .

"Monsieur Necker is not the most to be feared. Open your eyes and consider the leader by whom you may be carried away. It is Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans who is making the Revolution, Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans who used Monsieur Necker like a cloak to hide his intrigues. His levity has hitherto saved him from suspicion; no one thought his proceedings were worth watching, consequently they were thought to be of no importance. He feigned madness, so to speak, like Ulysses, but like him, too, he had his object. This object is to make himself, before long, master of the kingdom. It must be admitted that circumstances serve his purpose. The fear he spreads in all minds, by the crowd in his pay who say all he wishes them to in the Palais-Royal, animates his whole party, whilst the members of the other two seem struck by paralysis. One cannot recover from one's astonishment at seeing the clergy without ambition and the nobility without energy. . . .

"But you will say: 'All this is a dream produced by your imagination. In submitting to the king's orders with the sanction of the Chamber I run no risk; my conscience is at rest.' Do not trust to this. The king's

orders are already nothing in the eyes of both parties. He cancels them himself from moment to moment. If he is defended it will be in spite of himself. But he will be defended—do not doubt it—with success and glory.

"May you consult, in such a great decision, only your loyalty and courage, then I shall fear for you no longer. But I dread your surroundings, I dread the unbelievable influence they have over you."[1]

She implores him to be cautious, to take no part he might afterwards regret in a "revolution that has for its basis, madness on one side and weakness on the other."

"Think," she says, "with terror what you would do amongst so many madmen, knaves, and rebels combined. Is it not hell in miniature? How could you make yourself heard in pleading the cause of humanity, justice, and good faith amongst men who have so often violated them?"

Never had Madame de Sabran shown truer insight than when she wrote this letter. She had seen in a sudden moment of illumination the real author of the disasters that were to befall France, the man who turned the greatest crisis in her history—the crisis that might have led to the regeneration for which they were all waiting—into the most sanguinary of revolutions. The cause of the monarchy was not lost until the Duc d'Orléans destroyed all sane and well-considered plans of reform by opening the door to the mob. Vicious, mean, and mercenary, he found among the *canaille* a worthy following. By bribery and flattery he secured their allegiance; posing as a friend of the people, he declared before the Revolutionary Tribunal: "I desire the death of all who oppose the sovereignty of the people!" Yet no one despised the people more profoundly. "Le Duc d'Orléans," says the Duc de Levis, "était le plus atroce et en même temps le plus lâche des scélérats."

[1] Lent by Monsieur Gaston Maugras.

The Palais-Royal was a hot-bed of sedition and the resort of all the lowest of the mob.

Arthur Young, in Paris at this moment, describes the methods employed to incite the mob to violence : " At night the fireworks, and illuminations, and mob, and noise at the Palais-Royal increased ; the expense must be enormous ; . . . there is no doubt of it being the Duc d'Orléans' money. The people are thus kept in a continual ferment, are for ever assembled, and ready to be in the last degree of commotion whenever called on by men they have confidence in."

Here, on that hot Sunday of July the 12th, after the dismissal of Necker, young Camille Desmoulins, with wild black hair and flashing eyes, stood on a chair haranguing them :

" Friends, there is not a moment to be lost ; Necker is dismissed. This dismissal is the tocsin for a Saint-Barthélemy of patriots ! To arms ! " Such were the methods, such the lies by which the populace was lashed to fury.

Madame de Sabran, in her house of the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré, heard the sound of the rising tumult—the gathering of troops beyond the trees of her garden in the Place Louis XV, guns firing round the Tuileries, then the galloping of horses coming nearer as the mounted troops under the Prince de Lambesc—ordered not to fire on the people—were driven back into the Champs Elysées.

On the other side of the house the street was filled with rioters, men and women drunk with the contents of the pillaged wine-shops, wearing in their ragged caps green sprigs torn from the chestnut-trees of the Palais-Royal—emblems of liberty. Terrifying freaks of humanity, these—men with matted hair and blood-shot eyes, dishevelled women shrieking curses, with hastily improvised weapons—old guns, scythes, and pikes grasped in their clutching fingers ; human tigers thirsting for the blood that was now beginning to flow

in the streets of Paris, and for four more terrible years was to flow unceasingly.

All these things Madame de Sabran, from her quiet house, saw and heard with a sinking heart. Shut in between the two infernos—the tumultuous Champs Elysées and the rioting streets—she trembled, not for her own safety, but that of Elzéar, the highly-strung, delicate boy who since his birth had needed all her care. At any moment that raging human sea might break down the barriers of the great houses and wreak a hideous vengeance on the people they now believed to be the authors of their wrongs. Where in this infernal city was safety to be found?

Night fell at last over the scene, a night that brought no rest to those indoors who listened, no calm to those who crowded through the streets. All through the hours of darkness wild bands paraded the town with flaming torches, breaking into shops and burning down the barricades, whilst above the roll of drums and the shrieking of the populace sounded the ominous knell of the tocsin—the cry of the great city calling for help against destruction.

When morning came Madame de Sabran felt she could bear it no longer. Alone with Elzéar amongst all this horror and confusion her position was particularly helpless. The Chevalier was ten miles away at Versailles, and cut off from communication with the capital. There was nothing for it but to leave Paris and take Elzéar to a place of safety. Yet she dreaded leaving Boufflers to his fate at such a crisis. At last, torn between anxiety for her child and misery at parting from the man she loved, she seized a pen and wrote the Chevalier an almost illegible letter of farewell:

"*The 13th of July*: Monday, eleven o'clock.

"The tumult increases in such a way and the news is so alarming that I must put off no longer and go. But go without news of you! I can hardly bear it.

But for Elzéar I would stay, at whatever risk or peril to myself, until I knew that you were out of danger. I fear your wretched Assembly. I am afraid of some treachery. Try to keep yourself from harm—it would be my death-blow.

"Paris remains without troops; they are said to be at Versailles. The *bourgeois* are arming themselves, I am told, in order to defend themselves against the populace. Rage and licence are at their height. Good-bye. Think of your poor wife who is a thousand times more anxious on your account than on her own, and who, in the midst of so many dangers, feels but one regret—that of going away from you. I am so distressed that I can hardly hold my pen."

Then, taking advantage of a lull in the tumult, she entered her coach with Elzéar and started for Plombières. She was not a moment too soon—the next day the Bastille fell and the tide of revolution was unloosed.

CHAPTER II

THE STORM BREAKS

ALL through the hot night of July 13 the Chevalier de Boufflers sat in the vast and dimly lighted hall where in stoic calm the deputies of the Assembly awaited death, for the Salle des Menus Plaisirs was surrounded with rioting troops and at any moment the raging sea of Paris might burst upon Versailles.

On the evening of the 14th messengers arrived from the city to tell the Assembly the terrible story of the day's doings. And at the news that the fury of the populace had been turned against the Bastille—that "symbol of despotism"—the "representatives of the People" heaved a sigh of relief, the insurgents that they had regarded as "brigands" now became "heroes," and the destruction of the state prison was acclaimed as an act of popular justice.

For the benefit of the Assembly, however, as for posterity, the true facts regarding the "pitiable enterprise," as Monsieur Louis Madelin describes it, had been carefully suppressed. The Governor of the Bastille, the humane Monsieur de Launay, was represented as having called a truce before firing on the people; in reality precisely the opposite had occurred.

De Launay, anxious to avoid bloodshed, had withdrawn the cannons from the battlements and on the insurgents' word of honour that no injury would be done to its defenders,[1] had admitted them to the prison,

[1] Elie, who, with Hulin, was the principal leader of the mob, stated afterwards: "La Bastille n'a point été prise de vive force; elle s'est rendue sur la parole que j'ai donnée, foi d'officier français, qu'il ne serait fait de mal à personne."

whereupon they immediately proceeded to murder de Launay, Major de Losme, known for his humanity as the "consoler of the prisoners," two other officers, and three "invalides." After this infamous act of treachery came the liberating of the prisoners—four forgers,[1] two lunatics (whom it was found necessary to shut up again at Charenton a few days later) and the Comte de Solages,[2] a Sadic debauchee. It was unfortunate that the great attempt had not been made ten days earlier, for then they might have had de Sade[3] himself to parade in triumph through the streets.

So began the new era of liberty, with the heads of seven brave men borne on pikes and a debauched aristocrat carried shoulder high by "the People!"

From this moment the character of the Revolution underwent a disastrous change. The movement that had begun so spontaneously and with such a real aspiration for reform, was now passing rapidly into the hands of unscrupulous agitators who saw their chance of turning the tide of popular feeling to their own advantage.

Until this moment a peaceful settlement of the

[1] The forgers were Béchade, Laccorège, Pujade, and Larroche; the lunatics Tavernier, imprisoned for being "fainéant, ivrogne, violent, maltraitant ses parents et les accablant d'injures," and de Whyte, a man of Irish origin.

[2] The Comte Gabriel de Solages, born 1746, imprisoned at the request of his family for having committed "une action monstrueuse." His uncle, the Comte de Carmeaux, wrote to Saint-Priest in 1772 saying: "Les crimes atroces dont le Comte de Solages s'est souillé ne méritent que trop qu'il soit renfermé toute sa vie." See "La Liste de Prisonniers à la Bastille," by Funck-Brentano, and "La Bastille Dévoilée."

[3] The famous Marquis de Sade (1740 to 1814), whose name has gone down to posterity as the symbol of immorality, was imprisoned repeatedly for unspeakable vices. In 1784 he was put into the Bastille, but in June of 1789 he became violent, and de Launay was obliged to confine him to his cell. He revenged himself by haranguing the inhabitants of the Faubourg-Saint-Antoine, into which his window opened, by means of a tin funnel which he used as a megaphone, inciting the people to deliver the prisoners. De Launay had him removed to Charenton ten days before the taking of the Bastille, but he was liberated eight months later by the Revolutionaries, and survived the Terror triumphantly.

situation seemed not impossible. There were many good men and true in the Etats-Généraux who might have carried out the work of reform to a glorious conclusion, whilst the king, says Jefferson, " had not a wish but for the good of the nation." " Louis XVI," both Jefferson and Arthur Young agree, " was the honestest man in the kingdom," and so far he had few real enemies amongst the leaders of the revolutionary movement. Necker, as we have already seen, believed in a monarchy, Mirabeau would have saved the royal family, even Robespierre was not yet a republican. The Revolution at this stage might have been effected without shedding a drop of blood; all necessary reforms might have been obtained by degrees from Louis XVI and an era of liberty inaugurated for the nation. Then, indeed, the French Revolution would have proved the great regeneration which all had been awaiting and would have evoked the admiration of the whole civilized world. But from July of 1789 the movement was no longer spontaneous; it was a series of outbreaks systematically *engineered by agitators* who worked the people up to violence.[1] The people, left to themselves, would never have committed the excesses that made the history of the Revolution a tale of horror unparalleled in the annals of the human race. For, as Monsieur Gustave le Bon has pointed out, " the mass of the true people is essentially conservative, it clings to tradition, it is hard-working, patient, and submissive to discipline; but beneath this mass lies a residuum of malcontents—alcoholic degenerates, thieves, beggars, needy, unemployed and unemployable, who have no place in the social system and are ready to throw themselves into any subversive movement." It was in this latter category—*la bête populaire*, as Monsieur le Bon describes it—that the revolutionary agitators found their ready tool; whilst the

[1] See on this point " La Révolution française et la psychologie des révolutions," by Gustave le Bon (pp. 54–64); also " La Révolution," by Louis Madelin (p. 74).

" mass of the true people " had to be perpetually worked up by lies, alarms, or misrepresentations to produce the degree of violence desired by their leaders. This fact has been persistently ignored by pro-revolutionary writers, who would have us believe that each outbreak was the irrepressible act of an exasperated people; but we have only to examine such outbreaks separately in order to realize that they were all artificially produced. Thus the storming of the Bastille was, as we have seen, worked up by the lying reports of Camille Desmoulins; the March on Versailles on October 6, three months later, was carefully organized beforehand, and many women were bribed or forced to swell the crowd [1]; so, again, the massacres of September were the result of an alarm circulated by Danton and his party to the effect that the aristocrats were in league with the Prussians to murder all good citizens, yet even then assassins had to be hired to carry out the hideous task. Indeed, so great was the distaste of the true people for bloodshed that it took five years to bring about the Reign of Terror and with it the final annihilation of the old régime. That this frightful climax was also not the will of the people we shall see later on.

" By the autumn that followed the fall of the Bastille," says Monsieur Louis Madelin, " the Revolution was beginning to eliminate the true men of 1789 before devouring them." The members of the Assembly who had worked disinterestedly for the welfare of the people were being rapidly superseded by men who saw, in the state of public agitation, a means of gratifying their own ambition; the voice of the reformer was drowned by the shriek of the demagogue whose sincerity the fanatics of the day never paused to question. For fanaticism does not discriminate; the fanatic, whether in religion, politics, or art, asks only that one should

[1] " On organiza très artificiellement la journée. . . ." " La Révolution," by Louis Madelin, p. 91.

express belief in his shibboleths, and in France of 1789, as in England to-day, it was not the true friend of the people, but the man who proclaimed himself the friend of the people and talked the jargon of democracy who earned the applause of fanatical reformers.

In this increasing pandemonium calm reason was of no avail. "Vouloir faire le bien dans un temps de révolution," Napoleon is reported to have said, "c'est écrire sur le sable au bord de la mer. Ce qui échappe aux vents est effacé par les vagues." [1]

The hall of the Assembly had become a scene of indescribable confusion; a dozen members would rise to their feet at once, striving to out-shout each other, and the man who could shout the loudest was the one who obtained a hearing. When to the volume of sound he added violence of ideas his success was all the more assured.

There were moments when even Boufflers' courage failed him at the turn affairs were taking. Always an idealist, he had expected so much of human nature that the aspect under which he saw it now filled him with bitter disgust. Were these "the People" for whose liberty he had hoped and striven—the people who trampled underfoot the grey-haired governor of the Bastille, who indulged in scenes of cannibalism too horrible to record, who stuffed with hay the mouth of their murdered victim, Foulon—"Foulon, atrociously calumniated by being accredited with the sinister remark: 'If they have no bread, let them eat hay!'" [2]

A fortnight after the taking of the Bastille, Boufflers, on his way through the streets, found himself drawn into the midst of one of those terrifying crowds that the madness of the times brought together on the slightest provocation. This time the victims were two unfortunate Hussars who were being dragged to the *lanterne* and would have been hanged there if the

[1] "Mémoires de la Marquise de Créquy," vol. ix. p. 142.

[2] "La Révolution," by Louis Madelin, p. 59. See also Appendix, p. 431.

indignant Chevalier, at the risk of his life, had not come to their rescue.

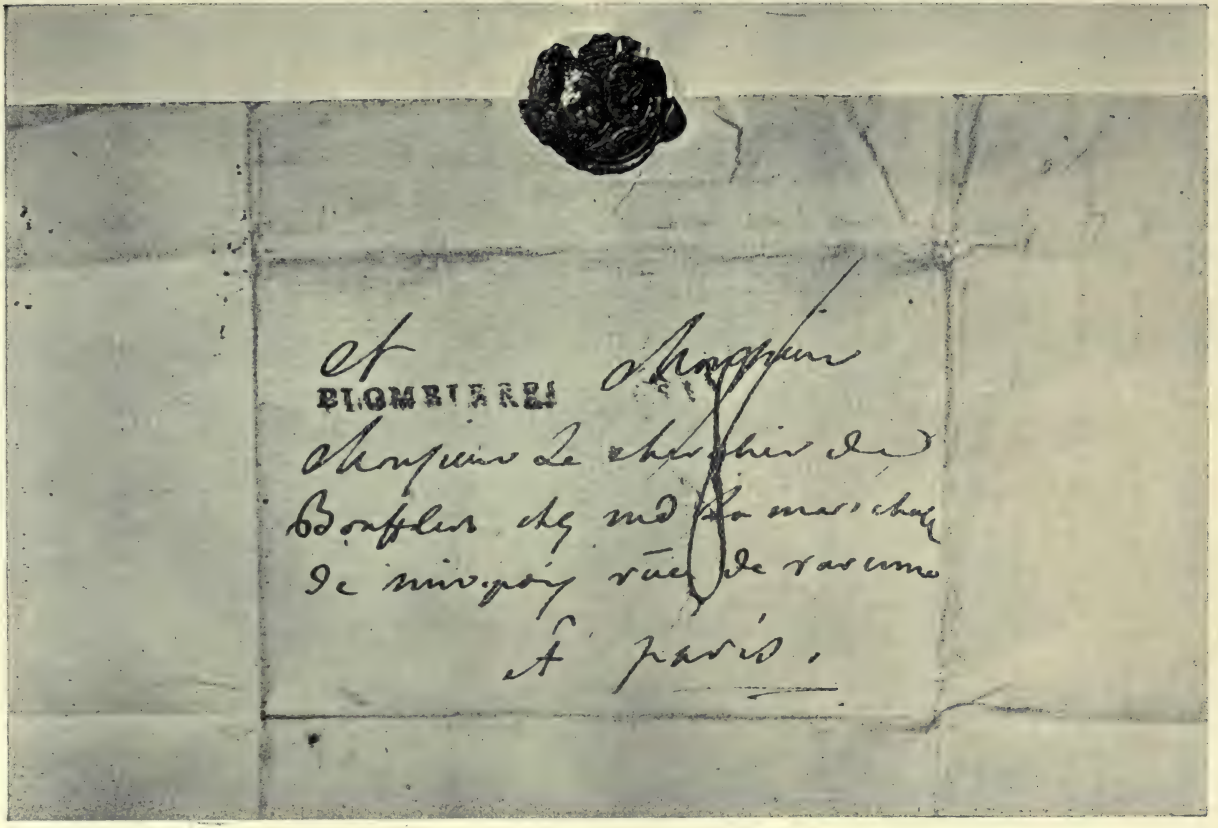
In the provinces the same revolting scenes were taking place with the same total disregard of justice. Arthur Young, travelling in France at this moment, records that " many châteaux have been burnt, others plundered, the seigneurs hunted down like wild beasts, their wives and daughters ravished, their papers and titles burnt, and all their property destroyed, and these abominations not inflicted on marked persons, who were odious for their former conduct or principles, but an undiscriminating blind rage for the love of plunder."[1]

At an inn where Young stayed this July he found a seigneur and his family who had escaped from their flaming château, half naked, in the night, " and this family valued and esteemed by their neighbours, with many virtues to command the love of the poor, and no oppressions to provoke their enmity."[2]

But these acts of violence are, again, not spontaneous. " Robbers, galley-slaves, and villains of all denominations," Young says further, " have collected and instigated the peasants to commit all sorts of outrages." Nor do they always obey willingly. " In Auvergne the peasants themselves show great repugnance at behaving in this way towards such good *seigneurs*."[3] Madame de Sabran, on her arrival at Plombières, found the same disturbances taking place in the neighbourhood, and her references to the hordes of unknown bandits carrying out their work of destruction, in spite of the opposition offered by the villages, shows that here too the peasants were not responsible for the trouble.

" I thought, by fleeing from Paris, to find tranquillity in these mountains, and to be able to live here for a time in safety with my child—but not at all. The storm is reaching us. Luxeuil is on fire. They are robbing the

[1] " Travels in France," by Arthur Young, dated July 27, 1789.
[2] *Ibid.*, July 30, 1789. See Appendix, p. 428.
[3] " La Révolution," by H. Taine, vol. i. p. 120.



LETTER ADDRESSED BY THE COMTESSE DE SABRAN

people who are there drinking the waters and burning their carriages. They wished to kill the abbé of Luxeuil, who is the best man in the world . . . [he] came here yesterday to take refuge, but was begged to go elsewhere for fear of bringing the same tumult on Plombières, and at this moment he has perhaps been murdered. Remiremont is besieged ; they wish to have the title-deeds, to burn down the house. Several villages came to their rescue. Troops are being sent from Epinal, but it is feared that there are not enough. They are a horde of vagabonds and bandits of whom neither the plans nor the leaders are known, and who carry desolation everywhere. All Franche Comté is infested by them, and it is said they are threatening Besançon. Meanwhile all are fleeing from here—nothing could be sadder. Terror has overcome everybody. . . . In a few days I shall shine alone in this retreat and I do not know what I shall decide to do. The waters are an attraction to me, and I do not think that for the sake of my frail person, which can do neither good nor harm, they will come and besiege Plombières and accord me the honours of battle. But I hear cries ! here are drunken peasants arriving. This time I think it is all over with your poor wife. I will see if we must fly or perish. . . .

" It was not the pillagers yet, but they are expected. These are some English people arriving from Luxeuil who have taken an escort of a hundred peasants to protect them. It is the funniest thing in the world ! Their carriage is covered with posters : ' Vive le tiers ! ' and all their servants, as well as they themselves, have the cockade of liberty. They give frightful accounts of what is going on at Luxeuil. Women who were there taking the waters are obliged to fly on foot across the fields—they are pursued, insulted. All the men have taken up arms to try and restore order. They have seized a great number of these bandits and taken them to prison ; but the doors were soon forced open, and all escaped and are roving about the country."

Yet even this terrible state of affairs did not rouse the aristocracy to take vigorous measures, and, instead of attempting to put down rebellion with a firm hand, they made the fatal mistake of granting further concessions.

Their reply to the disorder that was taking place in the provinces was given on the night of August 4. It was eight o'clock in the evening, and the Assembly was about to rise, when suddenly the Vicomte de Noailles, known to his world as "Jean sans Terre," sprang from his seat and, amidst wild applause, demanded the "abandonment of privileges." He was followed by the revolutionary, Duc d'Aiguillon, who made a speech condoning the behaviour of the people, after which the Duc de Châtelet, before referred to, provoked fresh acclamations with a tirade against feudalism. Then began that amazing scene, described by Mirabeau as "an orgy," in which the nobility and clergy of France vied with each other in renouncing *dîmes* and *corvées*, *tailles* and *droits de chasse*. Some one rises to protest against the *silence des grenouilles*—the duty imposed on the peasants of keeping the frogs quiet during the lying-in of the seigneur's wife; another cries: "I propose the suppression of pigeon-cots!" and "the Assembly unanimously proscribes the entire race of pigeons." Rabbit-warrens fall under the ban amidst renewed applause. "C'était un délire, une ivresse." The members of the Assembly, in a frenzy of abnegation, fell on each others' necks and wept with joy that the day of regeneration had come at last. At eight o'clock in the morning they all repaired to the chapel to sing a "Te Deum" of thanksgiving.

Thus, after this all-night sitting of August 4, the Assembly was able proudly to announce that "the feudal system had been entirely abolished"; at one fell blow the traditions of 1,400 years had been swept away for ever, and the descendants of the men who in the past had made France great and glorious were the ones to carry out the work of destruction. Never were visionaries more misguided. "The People," they told themselves, "touched by so much generosity, would now return to law and order." Nothing was further from the truth; the people are never touched by any

abandonment of dignity on the part of those they have been accustomed to obey. These reforms were necessary, but they should have come about calmly and ceremoniously, after due forethought, instead of being flung to the people in a moment of hysteria which, to the mind of the populace, was more likely to appear as the result of fear than of generosity.

Stanislas de Boufflers, sitting through this wild night at the Assembly, was filled with a deep disgust. He himself was quite ready to renounce his privileges, and though he could ill afford to lose the revenues he drew from his abbeys of Longeville and Béchamp, he rightly considered that the system which accorded them to him was defective. But his good sense and his taste were revolted as much by the behaviour of the Assembly as by that of the people, and a sudden bitter hatred of the human race came to him. "I must get out of this!" we find him writing three days later to Madame de Sabran, "and when I say *this* I mean Paris, I mean cities, I mean such places as are inhabited by those evil animals so improperly called men. . . ."

With this mood of pessimism a craving comes to him to throw up his political career and fly to the woman he loves. He tells her of a farmhouse that he knows in the Vosges at the end of the lake of Gerardmer, with high mountains on one side and smiling meadows on the other, where he dreams of a life lived with her alone, away from the haunts of men. It was the vision that, ever since the days of "Aline," had appealed to his imagination and recurred through all his writings in strange contrast to the licentiousness that too often characterized them.

> "Allons tous deux vivre ailleurs,
> Fuyons la cour et la ville;
> Loin du bruit et des grandeurs
> Choisissons un humble asile:

Qu'importe notre séjour,
Si nous y menons l'Amour ?

" Entre ces sauvages monts,
Dans ce vallon solitaire,
Tous deux nous habiterons
Où tu vois cette chaumière :
Qu'importe notre séjour,
Si nous y menons l'Amour ?

" Nous entendrons les concerts
Des oiseaux du voisinage ;
Et des sapins toujours verts
Nous offriront leur ombrage :
Tout charme dans un séjour
Où l'on est avec l'Amour.

" Oublions avec Paris,
Luxe, élégance et dorure,
Si pour nous l'art a son prix,
Il ne vaut pas la nature ;
Et rien ne vaut un séjour
Où l'on vit avec l'Amour.

" Ton bel âge sans mépris
Voit approcher ma vieillesse,
Et mes cheveux bientôt gris
N'effraieront point ta tendresse ;
Non, jamais de ce séjour
Nous ne verrons fuire l'Amour."

What were Madame de Sabran's feelings on receiving Boufflers' proposal of love in a cottage at this crisis ? She was evidently in no way surprised at its incongruity with the grave events taking place around him as he wrote. Love, to her, was everything, and she asked no more of life than that he should leave his " abominable Assembly " and share with her the only true happiness, and so, in an ecstasy of happiness, she pressed these pages to her heart, wept over them, covered them with passionate kisses.

" Your plan of solitude," she wrote back to him, " goes to my head, and that little hermitage where,

beyond the reach of all intruders, I shall live for you alone! What happiness it will be to serve you, to see you eat the food I have prepared, to clothe you in the linen I have woven, to rest you in a bed that I shall enjoy making well! What are riches compared to that simplicity which enables us to enjoy every feeling of the heart and all the true pleasures of the soul? In order to be happy, what need has one of excessive luxury, of differences of rank and vain honours?"

She goes on to speak of the political crisis, and, with that psychological discernment in which she excelled, puts her finger on the weak spot underlying all Socialistic creeds:

"For this equality with which they delude us, this level they think to obtain by cutting off heads, is only a chimera. Nature does not admit of it, still less does pride. Man will always be vain and ambitious. Compacts, arbitrary power may be destroyed, but the right of the strongest never will be, and the most moderate and philosophical of thinkers will take his neighbour's goods, his titles, and distinctions if he thinks he can do it with impunity.

"That is the history of mankind, my child, and at this moment our own. They say that another order of things will take the place of the one we have known, but I tell you that there will only be new faces. What an amazing Revolution! I cannot grow accustomed to it, and often I rub my eyes and think that this is only a bad dream, a dreadful nightmare that day will dispel.

"Come quickly, my friend, finish making all your sacrifices, give up everything, down to your shirt. With me you will have need of nothing. . . . What happy days we still may spend together! Believe me, if happiness is to be found on earth, it is in solitude that we must seek it. It will be found in our little house together with love. Yes, *love*! for, grandmother though I am, it burns my very soul. I feel it thrilling through my veins, quickening the beating of my heart, stimulating my imagination, bringing you vividly before my mind, whenever sleep gives me any rest.

It will make me survive myself. What matter if old age comes to freeze my senses? It is my soul that loves you. My love will be immortal like my soul. It is in God that I shall love you, if there is a God, when my soul is separated from my body, or in the universe, if there is only a universe. The being I shall animate hereafter will seek out eagerly the one that you animate, and that will be, perhaps, the loveliest romance in the world. We shall find each other again at twenty, and sacrifice ourselves again to love. But what delirium is carrying me away! Your letter is the cause of it, for it brings before me ideas which have often charmed me in my castles in the air. Those are the only substantial ones at present, so let us build them, let us build them without scruple."

But, as so often before, Madame de Sabran's hopes had been raised only to be dashed to earth again. Boufflers did not join her in the Vosges, but remained on in the Assembly vainly endeavouring to play his part in the work of reformation. Before long his mood of cynicism passed and a few weeks later we find him, with his confidence in human nature restored, describing in glowing terms to the Académie the era of regeneration that is dawning on France.

At Madame Necker's *salon* that evening the Chevalier's speech was read aloud by La Harpe, amidst the applause of the assembled guests, particularly that of Madame de Staël, who could hardly contain her admiration at sentiments so in accord with her own. After describing in rather redundant language the civilization of ancient Greece, Boufflers becomes eloquent on the subject of patriotism and the struggle for liberty now taking place in France:

"Is it a question," he exclaims, "of the Greeks' noblest passion—their patriotism? . . . In the matter of patriotism is the example of the Greeks necessary to us? No, that sacred fire, too long covered, has yet never been extinguished, and has only awaited the breath of a citizen-king to fan it into flame!"

Enthusiastic murmurs greeted this prediction, which was realized a year later when Louis XVI, in accepting the new constitution, was hailed as the " Citizen-king." It was some moments before La Harpe could make himself heard to read the end of the speech :

" Already a like spirit animates us, a like feeling exalts us, a like purpose guides us, and a like title fills us with pride—it is that of Frenchmen ! We know, as the Greeks knew, that there is no true existence without liberty, without which no one is a man, for law without liberty is not freedom. [Renewed applause.] We know, as they did, that in the midst of the necessary inequalities incident to the gifts of Nature and of Fate, all citizens are equal in the eyes of the law, and that no privileges are worth that priceless equality which alone can save us from hating or being hated. We know, as they did, that *each one of us belongs to his country rather than to himself*, and that to his country every citizen owes the tribute of his goods, of his courage, of his talents, of his vigils, as the tree owes the tribute of its shade and its fruits to the ground in which it is rooted."

In these noble words the Chevalier de Boufflers showed himself to be the true patriot as well as the true democrat. For the true democrat can be distinguished from the false by this characteristic—high-minded and disinterested himself, he believes his fellow-men to be actuated by like motives, and therefore appeals to their higher instincts, to their patriotism, to their altruism and their powers of self-sacrifice, whilst the false democrat, fighting only for his own hand, believes mainly in the egoism of others and so appeals to their baser instincts, to their envy, their vanity, and their cupidity, by abuse of the rich or powerful.

Compare this speech of the Chevalier de Boufflers with one made by the deputy Rewbell a little later :

" Do you wish," he cries, " that the nation should be rich ? Then do what I tell you ! Go and seize the treasures in the coffers of the aristocrats and the

financiers, and take whatever you find there—it is there, I tell you, that you will find what is necessary to the needs and the welfare of the nation ! " [1]

There is no appeal more potent than the appeal to men's *envy*, but it is one of which the honest politician disdains to make use. He does not believe that a man's life consisteth in the abundance of the things that he possesseth, he does not aim at a purely material ideal.

Thus Boufflers, except at rare moments of bitterness an ardent believer in human nature, resolutely refrained from stirring up class hatred. If the people were to be great and free they must themselves contribute to the welfare of the State, they must not merely demand the feudal privileges hitherto confined to the nobility, but show themselves prepared to take over the feudal duties hitherto performed by the class they had dethroned. Ready himself to sacrifice his private interests for the regeneration of his country, Boufflers hoped to find a like spirit of disinterestedness and patriotism in the people. He was doomed to bitter disillusionment.

Meanwhile, Madame de Sabran was less illusioned than ever; the horrors that had accompanied the taking of the Bastille were still fresh in her mind, and on the same day that Boufflers made his optimistic speech at the Académie she wrote to him as follows :

" I do not know yet what will happen to me, my child. My mind is overwhelmed by uncertainty. All that I can assure you is, that I shall certainly not return soon to Paris. I am not fond of people who cut off heads. All my blood freezes in my veins when I think of all these atrocities—not with fear, but with indignation."

[1] Jean François Rewbell, certainly followed out the precepts he advocated; besides accepting bribes from the Prussians, he was " constantly surrounded by speculators and army contractors, men accused of every form of speculation and fraud, whom he protected. He retired from office with a considerable fortune." (" Cambridge Modern History," vol. viii. p. 490.)

Then she goes on to speak of the abandonment of privileges on August 4.

"What good will come of the generosity of *the finest Assembly of the universe*, as these gentlemen (the members of the Assembly) call it? Who, in the whole history of the world, ancient or modern, can describe a night such as that night of sacrifices which must immortalize him who first broached the subject? I should like him to have been the first also to give up everything he possessed. . . . Eloquence is a fine thing, but example is still better under such circumstances. All I desire in this shipwreck is perfect equality. Everybody will be rich when nobody has anything left, for except for the needs that Nature imposes on us, we make use of what we have over for our neighbour. Vanity compels us to this in spite of ourselves, and at this moment it is vanity that is causing the Revolution. She is seated at the side of the greater number whispering her decrees to the sublime Assembly."[1]

Almost precisely the same words that Napoleon Buonaparte used long afterwards: "It was vanity that made the Revolution; liberty was only the pretext!"

Madame de Sabran's decision to remain in Switzerland saved her from seeing the tragic procession that took place five weeks later on October 5, when the Paris mob, led by the crazy harlot, Théroigne,[2] marched on Versailles and brought the royal family back to Paris amidst threats and curses. Madame de Sabran tells us of the way in which the news of this terrible day reached her.

She was staying at an hotel in Basle when she heard that two men had arrived from France, disguised as Swiss soldiers, and, full of curiosity, she sent to inquire who they were. Her manservant returned saying that one was a Comte de Tressan, who begged the favour

[1] Unpublished letter lent by Monsieur Gaston Maugras.

[2] Théroigne de Méricourt. She died raving mad at an asylum in 1817.

of a visit to Madame de Sabran, and proved to be no other than the son of the Marquise de Boufflers' old lover, the Comte de Tressan who had longed to hide his heart in her pink satin slipper long ago at Lunéville.

" At first his name alarmed me," writes Madame de Sabran, " for only a few days earlier I had heard of a Comte de Tressan, who was at the head of a conspiracy. He talked, however, of this conspiracy and told me that it consisted of about 15,000 gentlemen who had sworn to die to save their king and country ; that their plan was to take him to Metz ; that the king had consented, but over-haste had spoilt everything ; that the banquet of the Guards which caused such a stir had opened the eyes of the populace and served as a pretext to bring the king and royal family by force to Paris, which they had already thought of doing ; that he (the Comte de Tressan) found himself in the midst of the fray, and that nothing can give an idea of the terror and confusion of that day and that fatal night (the night of the 5th to the 6th of October) ; that the queen had been treated like the worst of criminals, that she heard it said all round her that she ought to be sent to La Force or Sainte-Pélagie : ' This abominable queen,' they said, ' who so loves the blood of the French that she feasts on it now ! Let us soak her arms and hands in the smoking entrails of her *gardes du corps !* ' and a thousand other suggestions of this kind. The poor little Dauphin was at the door of the queen's carriage with his hands clasped, crying : ' Mercy for Maman ! Mercy for Maman ! ' (Grâce pour Maman ! Grâce pour Maman !) I do not think anything in history can show a parallel to this. Never has a queen, even when guilty, been treated with such barbarity. And the king, already half dethroned, dragged in triumph amidst cries of ' Vive le Roi ! ' preceded by eighty of his Guards who had been made prisoners, and obliged to plead for mercy for them by saying that they had not fired on the people ! . . .

" It seems that all projects have been abandoned. Chance alone will arrange all things, but the star of France has paled ; everything conspires for her destruction, her hour has struck ; she will share the fate of the

Roman Empire, and very much through the same causes. . . ."

It was through decadence the Roman Empire had perished, and it was through decadence that the monarchy of France was perishing now—the decadence that consists in *an incapacity for self-defence*, in a blind optimism that refuses to recognize the presence of danger, an optimism that from the Flood onwards has always characterized the victims of great disasters. It was true, as Madame de Sabran had said, that the Guards had not fired on the people, and it was by the king's order they had refrained. The Prince de Luxembourg, Captain of the Guard, begged in vain for the order to load the cannon.

" Allons donc, monsieur," answered the king, " des ordres de guerre contre des femmes? Vous vous moquez!" And the Guards are forbidden to fire a shot in self-defence.

Then followed that terrible night when the crowd surrounded the Château, filled with fury, not only against the royal family but against the National Assembly. " It was the clash of factions," says one of the deputies—Larevellière Lépeaux—" and their methods were as hideous as they were atrocious. All this mob that inundated the hall uttered threats against us. . . . When at midnight the Assembly made its way to the Château on the invitation of the king, the Avenue de Paris, from the hall to the Château, was bordered by two deep lines of this immense rabble. They talked loudly of playing at ball with the heads of the deputies. Our position was far from reassuring when, having reached the middle of the Avenue, we heard the drums that announced the arrival of the National Guard of Paris. But for this rescue what would have happened? . . . I believe that the party of d'Orléans was behind this multitude."

The Chevalier de Boufflers must have seen all these things; he was in the Assembly when the women broke into the hall and danced upon the platform of the

President; he must have watched the terrible procession set forth next day for Paris, with the fish-wives riding on the cannons and the heads of the murdered Guards carried before the eyes of the queen.[1] But his letters tell us nothing—it was probably not safe to write. We only know that at this crisis he showed himself to be worthy of his name. In the old days, when the monarchy had been supreme, he had often mocked at royal personages, but now that it was tottering to its fall he hastened to proclaim his loyalty. This was all the more honourable, for it will be remembered that the king, far from showing him any favour, had crossed his name out from the list of military promotions. But Boufflers proved magnanimous, for in three speeches made by him, as director of the Académie, a few weeks later, addressed to the king, the queen, and the dauphin, he expressed his devotion to the royal family in terms that at any other time might have been called obsequious, but were at this juncture exceedingly courageous.

All through these troubled times his calm philosophy never deserted him; only a few days after, the 6th of October, we find him peacefully writing love-letters to Madame de Sabran quite in the old way. Again he longs to escape from Paris, from the turmoil of the Assembly and fly to her in Germany:

"*Mon Dieu, ma fille!*" he exclaims, "how far we are from the time when, driven by Maître Jacquot of dirty memory [an old coachman of Boufflers'] we rushed about Germany! When will those happy days return? Let us hope that, one day, we shall be given back to each other like two vessels that, separated by a fearful storm, after having sailed long on unknown seas, sport of the winds and waves, sight one another again in less stormy weather, draw near, and make their way side by side to the next world. Good-bye, my wife; good-bye, all I love. Be calm, be happy if you can; above all, be careful in the district where you are going, for I am afraid of the country people."

[1] "La Révolution," by Louis Madelin, p. 97.

Tender words from Boufflers never failed to meet with a response from Madame de Sabran, and she writes back passionately :

" You are determined, then, that I shall never be cured of my madness ; you desire that my last breath shall be for you ? . . . Well then, be happy, my kind and dear, and too dear friend. How well you know the weakness of my heart ! . . . I feel more than ever, in spite of everything, that we were made for one another, and that it is only you I care for in all nature. . . . You must have, indeed, great merit to have inspired me with such a feeling as I feel for you—I, who cared only for independence, who felt every tie to be unbearable, I whose untamed nature and careless spirit led me to live apart from the world. . . . Love me as much as you can, for I know quite well that I am not lovable like you ; but love me more than any other, see you, my husband, because no one will ever love you as I do. Ah ! but the only good of life, the only reasonable occupation, is to love and to be loved ! " (Va ! le seul bien de la vie, la seule occupation raisonnable est d'aimer et d'être aimé.)

Then she turns to the burning questions of the hour :

" . . . As to politics, see if I was mistaken in my sad conjectures, and what I have to foretell you for the future is no better than for the past. Whatever you may say and hope, we are on the eve of an astounding Revolution, such as no good Frenchman should desire. I see a mine smouldering—how and where it will explode, this is the thought that makes me shudder, for after you, what I care for most is my poor country, my good and unhappy king.

" In spite of this, of not only my sad presentiments, but my conviction that in a very short time from now, frightful things will happen in France and in Paris, I am leaving Switzerland, and leaving it with as much grief as if I were leaving a port in the midst of a storm to expose myself to a tempest."

Yet, in spite of their love for each other, in spite, too, of the tremendous events that were taking place around them, these extraordinary people continued to quarrel at intervals just as they had done before. Even the

horrors of revolution could not mitigate Madame de Sabran's indignation if Boufflers failed to write to her regularly. "To-day is post-day," she had written soon after leaving Paris, "and still I have no news of you. If I do not receive any by the day after to-morrow, I shall bid you an eternal farewell."

But this eternal farewell has been impending now for twelve years, and Boufflers took the threat with calmness. Only when she scolded him too violently he allowed himself a word of gentle remonstrance:

"I might certainly be vexed by the very unkind letter that I have received from the best woman in the world. But with whom should I be vexed? With fate? with chance? with the post? with the committee of inquiries? in a word, with everything that is not you, for how could I be vexed with you, dear love—with you, who are dearer to my heart than my heart itself; with you, who even in your mad rages [tes folles colères] always love me as if you could not do otherwise? . . . Return then, once more, to the friendly affection that becomes you so well, dear love, and in times so sad and stormy as these add not your suspicions, your anger, and your vexations to those I feel for all other good people, but endeavour at least that I do not find fresh troubles in the source of all my consolations."

It must have been perfectly maddening for Boufflers to be scolded at this crisis, for his position in the Assembly was growing daily more difficult owing to the increasing prejudice against the nobility. Nothing, as he said, could be more unfair than to extend this prejudice to him, since he had always been "the most zealous partisan of equality," but fairness was a virtue fast disappearing from the minds of the Assembly.

Boufflers had yet to discover that justice in any form was soon to disappear from the government of France, and that, instead of the reign of freedom and equality, the reign of despotism was about to begin.

"Le despotisme de la multitude, voilà le plus funeste de tous les despotismes!"

CHAPTER III

SHIPWRECK

THE winter of 1789-90 is described in the annals of the period as " very gay." There were charming tea-parties, the theatres were crowded, new fashions in hats—*chapeaux à la Révolution*—had an immense success. The *marchandes de frivolités* were busier than ever.

Madame de Sabran, not sharing the optimism of her world with regard to the future, did not return that winter to the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré but continued to travel in the Vosges, after which she joined Delphine at Nidervillers, the home of the de Custines, where the general had started a magnificent porcelain factory to give employment to the inhabitants.

Nowhere was the spirit of feudal philanthropy seen to better advantage than at Nidervillers. The general, tiresome as he might be with his own class, was a true father to the people on his estates, and the affection he and his family inspired in them is described in an amusing letter written by Madame de Sabran to the Chevalier just after the birth of Delphine's second son Astolphe.

" Before scolding you, as you deserve, for a fortnight's silence, and for reproaches as unjust as they are unfounded, I must tell you that my expecting mother has just given birth to a very pretty little boy, whom I received in my apron, as the old wives say, and whom I kissed heartily after he had made his toilet. This event made a great stir in the village,

and my 'grandmaternity' was announced by the sound of cannons for more than two leagues round. Over a hundred and fifty peasants, led by the Captain Pèdre, his gun across his shoulder, came with the required gravity to lead me to the church with the child. Two lines were formed by the orders of the captain who is our Lafayette here, and has quite as many talents as he. Then we started out. A fearful wind that seemed to conspire against us, carried away our hats, blew my skirts about, and sent into my eyes and ears all the fire and smoke of the most imposing artillery in the world. But these spiteful blasts were outwitted, for they only served to show the skill and good-will of all these kind people to better advantage. A *commère babillarde* was at my side—this is the custom and the title given to the woman employed to throw bonbons to all the little children. . . . At last, by means of the skilful manœuvres of our clever captain, we reached the end of our labours. The greatest order was maintained during the walk from the church; the bells made their silvery voices heard, the parish 'serpent,' the organ, the *hautbois*, and the horn, all vied with each other in making the loudest din, and the curé and the schoolmaster baptized my poor godson so thoroughly and with so much salt and water that he vomited, unhappy one! on all the bystanders, and caught a cold in one eye which makes him blind in it for the moment. I gave him the name of Astolphe, so that one day he may go to the moon and fetch us phials of good sense.

After the manner of the honourable members of your august Assembly, every one returned home after the ceremony. I was so touched by the kind-heartedness of these poor peasants at a time when so many others only take up arms in order to burn down châteaux and murder their seigneurs that I had all the difficulty in the world to keep from crying. I gave them my last crown piece—so much does goodness of heart appeal to me. May he be for ever held in execration in the memory of man who first thought of destroying this natural relationship between poverty and wealth, between weakness and strength, and this just and kindly interchange of gratitude and benefits!"

The de Custines, unfortunately for themselves, were not content with benevolence to the poor on their estates, but threw themselves into the revolutionary movement with an ardour that distressed and alarmed Madame de Sabran. That people should turn in this way against their own class was incomprehensible to her, not because she was blind to the faults of the nobility, but because she foresaw that if the power they held passed from their hands it would be used far more disastrously by others. But General de Custine, narrow-minded, intolerant, and dictatorial, found in the Revolution a congenial element. His democratic beliefs had taken the aggressive form of ranting against the aristocracy, and, as we should say to-day, " playing to the gallery," so as to appear a hero in the eyes of " the People." If Madame de Sabran had found him exasperating in the old days about Armand's marriage settlements she found him now far more hard to bear; but, worst of all, the gentle Armand himself had followed his father's example and developed *folie anti-aristocratique*, which in time spread to Delphine and even to Gaston, who by the age of five was a " furious democrat." Thus Madame de Sabran alone of all her circle regarded the Revolution with dismay, and thereby found herself constantly at variance with those she loved the best.

" The worst part of this deplorable Revolution," she wrote to Boufflers, " is the discord sown by it in circles, in families, between friends, and even between lovers. Nothing is free from this horrible contagion; henceforth we must hate each other to the death or love each other to madness. But hatred will always carry the day in hearts withered by intrigues and politics, and then farewell to the charm of life! (Adieu, le charme de la vie!) "

So when those around her assured her that all was going splendidly, that the great Regeneration of France was now in progress, Madame de Sabran listened sadly,

for her own powers of clairvoyance showed her something of the future that lay in store for them all. Never did she write anything more strangely prophetic than this letter to the Chevalier, in which two years before the Massacres of September, four years before the Reign of Terror, she foretold the horrors that were to come to pass :

"*May* 14, 1790.

"I was beginning to feel disheartened by your silence, and ready to give rein to my sad and foolish imagination, when at last I received one of those letters that always make my heart beat and show you to me so vividly that I can almost hear you speaking. So at last you begin to perceive that all is not for the best in the best of all possible worlds, and to wonder whether there are not monsters in cities as there are in forests. We are not at the end of all this, my child, and everything that we have read in history of the days of savagery is nothing to what we are destined to experience. All the restraints that should hold in the mob have now been broken through, and it will take advantage of the liberty given it to slaughter us all —not in one massacre of Saint-Barthélemy, but in ten thousand. I tremble when I think of you in the midst of this abyss, and that any moment I may see you dragged down into it. What a horrible thought!"

In Paris the tide of feeling against the aristocrats was steadily rising, and on June 19 the Assembly made a further bid for popularity by abolishing all titles, orders of knighthood, liveries, and armorial bearings. Madame de Sabran, to whom these things counted as nothing in comparison with the real things of life, was nevertheless indignant at this sweeping away of the traditions she held dear. It was not rank she cared for, but the glorious deeds on which rank at this date was founded, the romance of chivalry that clung around the great names of men whose ancestors had fought and died for France, the visions of the past these names evoked. Rude lords of the iron hand who rid

the land of wild beasts, built mills, stemmed floods, and round whose fortress walls the peasants gathered for safety from barbarian invaders; great suzerains who administered rough justice to their vassals; seigneurs who led out their men to battle, receiving in their own breasts the first lance-thrusts of the foe; crusaders who had sailed with Saint-Louis to the Holy Land. Amongt these names none had been more glorious than de Sabran, from Guillaume de Sabran who had fought at Antioch down to the hero of the *Centaure* who had given Eléonore de Jean de Manville his name. What wonder that she wrote with scorn of the Assembly which with a sweep of the pen obliterated all the honours that these deeds had won?

"The fools!" she cried, "they would be more than gods if they could efface from the memory of men all that the centuries have graven there. They wish to annihilate all titles: let them first burn the books that bear witness to the birth, valour, and virtues of those brave and loyal knights, the honour and the mainstay of France. I admit that their descendants are degenerate, but the blood that runs in their veins is still worthy of respect. Besides, do these monsters flatter themselves, however extravagant they may be, to overthrow the power of public opinion as they have overthrown the kingdom of France? It is this opinion that will judge them sooner or later and will laugh at their decrees. . . . So you are now Monsieur Boufflers. Do not forget to tell me how to address you, for the Assembly might take my ignorance for contempt of its decrees and put my letters in the 'cabinet.'[1] As for me, you must call me Eléonore Sabran, so as to avoid confusion with the Marquise de Sabran."

A few days later she writes again:

"The indignation I feel at all that is happening in your hell, my dear husband, prevents me writing as

[1] The *cabinet noir* in which letters containing "aristocratic" sentiments were placed by the postal authorities during the Revolution.

often as I should like, for I fear to compromise you by being unable to dissemble what I think of so much bad faith, injustice, and extravagance, of which the whole world since its origin offers no such example. How can you retain a shadow of hope in this frightful abyss which each day grows darker and deeper? what can be the end of all these monstrous decrees—ill-conceived, ill-digested, dictated merely by all the passions incoherently assembled in base minds—if not the total ruin of the monarchy, of private people, and perhaps of all France? Of what use are all these speeches, compliments, displays, of these Te Deums sung before victory and these oaths taken before the Constitution? Instead of all this, why not try to find the source of the evil so as to apply a swift and certain remedy? Is it by means of destroying everything that they will succeed in building up a firm structure, and by murdering each individual that they will ensure general prosperity? Has the path of despair been ever the path of happiness, and will soil watered with tears, not to say with blood, bring forth abundance? What an illusion! Keep it, however, as long as you can, for if you saw with my eyes you would be too unhappy." [1]

She begs Boufflers to leave Paris before July 14, the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, for which day the great *Fête de la Fédération* was being prepared, and she dreads some fresh outbreak of violence. Her fears were shared by many other people, for the wildest rumours were afloat as to the intentions of both parties on the momentous day. The aristocrats believed that an insurrection would take place in which the deputies of the nobility in the Assembly would be massacred, the king dethroned, and the Duc d'Orléans elected in his place, whilst the revolutionaries assured the people that the aristocrats intended to shoot their deputies, to burn down the suburbs, and restore the kingdom to an absolute monarchy. Some of the democratic newspapers went even further, and in a brilliant flight of

[1] Unpublished letter lent by M. Gaston Maugras.

imagination warned all good citizens to be on their guard against a fearful collection of tigers, lions, hyenas, and leopards, which the aristocrats intended to let loose on the steps of the "autel de la patrie" when they came to take their civic oath. Accordingly a solemn deputation of the Assembly proceeded to examine the foundations, and even the drains of the Champ de Mars; but, not a single wild beast being found there, the good citizens were assured that they could assemble at the fête in perfect security.

After all, in spite of these forebodings, the great day passed without disturbance, and both parties gave vent to their feelings unrestrained; the king was cheered, the crowd danced on the site of the Bastille, and mass was celebrated before the people who were preparing to abolish the clergy by the Abbé de Talleyrand —he who had aspired to be known as the author of "Aline, Reine de Golconde," thereby provoking the Chevalier de Boufflers' satire.

Boufflers seems to have taken all these events with his habitual calmness. "I feel," he tells Madame de Sabran, "as if I were in a shipwreck where every one begins by stripping and ends by drowning himself." But he seeks consolation in the woman he loves. Why for a whole fortnight has she never written to him?

"What are you doing? What is happening to you, my wife? What has become of the promises you made me lately in words so sweet, so touching, and affectionate that the expressions you used seemed like your portrait. I could not help seeing your lovely face, your tender, touching look, your beautiful eyes always ready to shed gentle tears of feeling—in a word, it was you, just as if you had been there, as if I had heard you speaking, as if I had held you in my arms."

Amidst the chaos of the Revolution he longs for her letters "as the inhabitants of the ark longed for the doves that brought them messages of peace from the dry land." "One thing is certain," he says, "that is,

that you can only be happy with me, and I can only be happy with you."

Madame de Sabran seems to have recognized the truth of this statement, for when the autumn came and with it a lull in the storm she decided that she could keep away no longer, and she returned with her children to the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré.

. . . . .

Since Madame de Sabran was once more with the Chevalier a break occurs here in the correspondence, so that we can find no record of her impressions of Paris this year of 1790. But the Comte de Ségur, Boufflers' friend, who returned from Russia at this moment, has described it with minuteness.

The strangest thing about Paris, says de Ségur, was the contrast between the scenes taking place at the same time in different parts of the town. Whilst in the gardens of the Tuileries pretty women dressed in the latest fashions are walking peacefully beneath the trees, a crowd has collected at the Palais-Royal close by to applaud a demagogue standing on a table who is inveighing against "the perfidy of the court, the pride of the nobles, and the cupidity of the rich." As usual, the rioting element is made up mainly of the *bourgeoisie*, for, so far, in spite of agitators the life of the "people" goes on much as usual.[1] Thus both extremities of the social scale pursue their wonted occupations—in the fashionable "promenades," at the theatres and in the *salons* the aristocrats meet and scintillate as before, whilst at the Halles good citizens go marketing and sprightly *harengères* hand over herrings without a hint of the ferocity that is to transform them later into furies of the guillotine.

If the *salons*, however, continued to attract their former *habitués* a change had come over the spirit of the guests. De Ségur found them more animated and

[1] In this connection see the very curious "Journal d'un Etudiant," by M. Gaston Maugras.

wittier than ever, but they had lost their principal charm, that urbanity that had so long made them models of taste and manners. They talked seldom now of art or literature, but perpetually discussed politics with varying degrees of irritation : " every one talked loud and listened little ; ill-humour showed in tones as well as looks. Often in the same *salon* people of opposite opinions formed themselves into separate groups " ; there were those like the Duc d'Aiguillon, the Duc de Rochefoucauld, and the de Lameths frankly revolutionary ; others like de Ségur himself, the Chevalier de Boufflers, and Madame de Staël, who might be described as royalist democrats ; some, like the Duc de Nivernais, who, though desiring the regeneration of France, realized the danger of continuing the Revolution, whilst others—principally the young and frivolous or old and narrow-minded—resented from merely selfish motives the destruction of the old régime. In the last category was the young Vicomte de Ségur, brother of the Comte, who laughingly complained of the way the Revolution interfered with his amusements. " Je ne puis souffrir cette révolution, elle m'a gâté mon Paris." (I cannot endure this revolution, it has spoilt my Paris.) But with no little shrewdness of perception he added : " Whilst pretending to an imaginary philosophy, and a great love for the public good, and absolute abnegation of all private interest, it merely conveys to the world the ambition of a few, and can be expressed in a word : ' Clear out and make way for me ! ' " (Ote toi de là que je m'y mette !)

If the Vicomte de Ségur found his Paris spoilt for him, Madame de Sabran had still more reason to deplore the change that had come over the scene. " Before 1789 women were queens ; the Revolution dethroned them," said Madame Vigée le Brun. Arthur Young noticed the same thing this year of 1790 : " I may remark another effect of this Revolution, by no means unnatural, which is, that of lessening, or, rather

reducing to nothing, the enormous influence of the sex, . . ." a state of affairs Young was inclined to approve, as leading to the desirable result of women " sinking to what nature intended them for." [1] Young, in his reflections on human nature, was often short-sighted; a profounder philosophy teaches us that—

> " The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink
> Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free. . . ."

Never was this truth more exemplified than in the French Revolution. The ending of the Reign of Woman brought about an era of degradation in man such as the world had never seen before, and has never seen again until the Germans of to-day showed us the result of a civilization in which the influence of woman is of small account. Wherever woman is treated as a slave man is likely to become a savage, or that infinitely worse thing—a " cultured " fiend. Such were the men of the Reign of Terror which succeeded to the Reign of Woman, for by the time that stage of the Revolution was reached the only women who took part in the movement were the fish-wives and furies of the guillotine. It is a remarkable fact that not a single woman of any other class joined in the crimes of the Revolution. When once again the influence of a woman made itself felt it was to bring peace to a world of horror, " and the little hand of Teresia Cabarrus overthrew the guillotine."

In 1790, however, there were still a few women who could hold their own in the *salons* of Paris—women like Madame de Staël, who with her round, red face and passion for descanting found in this loud-voiced, wrangling world a congenial element, or Madame Roland, whose conviction of her own superiority made her appear a queen to her indiscriminating circle. But for women such as Madame de Sabran, gentle, dreamy, delicately witty, there was no longer any place. For

[1] " Travels in France." by Arthur Young, January 10, 1790.

Madame de Sabran did not belong to the order of strong-minded women, who in those stormy days could hold a *salon* spellbound and to-day command attention on the platform. She did not want to hold forth, argue, and declaim; she loved peace, harmony, and beauty in life, and she looked on with passionate regret at a Revolution that was gradually sweeping all these things away. "Adieu, le charme de la vie!"—in a word she had epitomized the effect of the Revolution on the world of Paris, an effect that was to be even more enduring than she realized. Years after the great upheaval other women might hold their courts, other *salons* come into being, but the charm of the old-world *salons* and the women of the old régime had passed from the world for ever.

Other things of greater moment than the charm of life were swept away this winter. The rising tide of popular fury against the clergy and the royal family culminated by the spring in open rebellion. The king and queen, with their children, were forcibly prevented by the populace from going to Saint-Cloud, and, after enduring for two hours the insults of the mob that surged around the carriage in which he was seated, Louis XVI once more bowed to the will of the people and re-entered the palace. In order to spare his ecclesiastics the humiliations to which he had himself been subjected, the king summoned his three almoners, one of whom was the Bishop of Laon, Monseigneur de Sabran, and ordered them to depart.

There was no longer any doubt about the gravity of the situation; even Mirabeau, when dying three weeks earlier, realized that the Revolution must now end in disaster. "I see so clearly," he had written, "that we are in a state of anarchy, and that every day we get deeper in. I am so disgusted at the thought that I have only helped towards a vast demolition." (Je vois si clairement que nous sommes dans l'anarchie, et que nous nous y enfonçons tous les jours davantage :

je suis indigné de l'idée que je n'aurai contribué qu'à une vaste démolition.)

The only man who could have saved the monarchy was now dead, and Madame de Sabran realized that to remain on in Paris would be in all probability to perish in the great demolition. For she knew that her enemies were still at work, and that her brother, who had left the Bastille in 1788, and the Abbé Bernard who had been released after only ten months' imprisonment, had taken advantage of the popular agitation to enlist the sympathies of the revolutionaries and to threaten her with their vengeance. A few months after the taking of the Bastille a revolutionary publication entitled "La Bastille Dévoilée" had appeared, containing this ominous comment on the arrest of the Abbé Bernard:

"You, prime movers, principal agents in the detention of the Sieur Bernard, know that sooner or later the most hidden plots are revealed. Shudder! we have in our hands the letter that this Bernard wrote to his mistress and which you intercepted. It is this letter that formed the basis of his inquiry, and has apprised us of all the horrors committed by you towards him. . . . Never, no, never, was there a greater abuse of authority than the one in question here."

To whom could these threats be addressed but to Madame de Sabran herself? Moreover, a year after the publication of this tirade there burst forth another blast from the revolutionary furnace—the scurrilous "Galerie des États-Généraux" and "Galerie des Dames Françaises," where, in a series of so-called "portraits," the most prominent amongst the aristocrats, including even the gentle Princesse de Lamballe, are held up to the scorn of the public. Here in these venomous pages the Chevalier de Boufflers under the pseudonym of "Fulber," is maliciously described in a "portrait" attributed to Laclos, whilst Madame de Sabran, as "Sapho," meets with the only hostile criti-

cism she ever incurred at the hands of her contemporaries.

"Sapho," this anonymous satire begins by saying, "would make one love indifference, so well does she imitate its attitude, its looks, and language. Her mind never appears disturbed, and yet she loves with frenzy, she hates with fury, she revenges herself with cruelty, she intrigues with persistence. . . ." It is easy to read here the influence of the Abbé Bernard, and when the writer goes on to recount that "Sapho has a brother she disowns" but whose opinion of her is far from favourable, a further light is thrown on this effusion. Yet the writer admits her fascination, and certainly, if her enemies could find nothing worse to say against her, this "portrait" in the Galerie des Dames Françaises is a high tribute to her virtue.

But in these precarious times no member of the hated "caste" could afford to have enemies, however slight was the cause on which their animosity was founded, and it would certainly have fared ill with Madame de Sabran and Elzéar if they had remained in France. So at last, yielding to the persuasions of Monseigneur de Sabran, who advised her to follow his example and leave Paris, she decided, with despair in her heart, to tear herself away from the Chevalier for the second time, and take Elzéar to a place of safety.

Friends were not wanting to offer a refuge to the storm-tossed Fleur des Champs at this critical moment:

"My dearest, my adored one," wrote the Comtesse de Stahrenberg (the sister of Comte Auguste de la Marck) from Austria, "you, who are all that is most charming in democracy as in aristocracy, whom I love with all my heart, and whom I wait and long for even more eagerly than your son-in-law awaits the regeneration, how can you remain in the midst of these outrages which no doubt make him more and more hopeful? Come as soon as you can and breathe the pure air of

our mountain half-way to heaven, removed far above all the passions that disturb this low world."

Mrs. Buller wrote also, begging Madame de Sabran to come to England, adding: "All that I have is yours!"

But Madame de Sabran decided to go neither to Austria nor to England; she realized the importance of influential protectors at this moment, and finally accepted the invitation of Prince Henry of Prussia to join him at Rheinsberg, his magnificent castle on the lake of Gumerich to the north-west of Berlin.

The parting from those she loved was heart-breaking; who could tell what might happen to them in this growing chaos—to the Chevalier battling on in the turbulent Assembly, to Armand and Delphine, both so young, so ardent, and so misguided, to their children, Gaston and Astolphe? Alas, her fears were all too well founded, for never again were they all to meet on earth, and the future was to be far more terrible than even her wildest dreams had pictured.

She had planned to leave Paris early in the morning before that crouching monster, the populace, had awakened. Day had only just dawned on May 15, as for the last time, she rose, and, looking out over the trees of her garden beneath which she had spent so many happy days with the Chevalier, saw the sun rising beyond the Tuileries bathing the troubled city in a delusive radiance.

The streets were just awaking to life, when, with Elzéar and his cousin, Charles de Mellet, she entered the small, plain travelling-carriage piled high with Elzéar's manuscripts, that was to take them on their journey, and for the last time drove out through the stately archway into the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré. Already bands of workmen carrying their tools were clattering over the cobble-stones in their heavy clogs to work, and some of these paused to call out angrily,

"Aristocrats!" at the passing carriage. The postilions, too, did not miss the opportunity of showing their resentment to the unhappy fugitives, and Madame de Sabran was thankful to arrive safely that night at Péronne, her first stopping-place on her way to Raismes, where she was to spend a few days with the Comtesse Auguste de la Marck. She was, however, not yet out of danger, for the next day, when she had started again on her journey, she was warned by two passers-by to avoid Valenciennes, where there was a probability that she would be robbed of all her money, and she was therefore obliged to take another route. Monseigneur de Sabran, who was also travelling to Raismes, met with worse adventures and had to fly for his life to Tournai.

It was characteristic of Madame de Sabran that, after all these alarms, she was able to spend a perfectly peaceful day sitting on the grass with the Comtesse Auguste, under the may-trees at Saint-Amand, reading "Ossian" aloud. Nature had never yet failed to restore her serenity, and this spring day spent in the woods with "the white Comtesse" and little Elzéar brought her once more a few hours of happiness. It was one of those moments when life seems to laugh and say, "See, I am not so terrible after all!" and that made her almost believe her fears and forebodings were imaginary. Here in the May meadows starred with happy flowers, beneath the dappled shade of the budding trees where the birds were busy with their young, and the whole scheme of nature was going on as usual who could dream that all was not right with the world, who could think that hate and envy, violence and bloodshed were realities and not the products of a fevered brain? Yet for all these moments when spring cast its spell over her and lulled her fears to rest, she was still haunted by terrible visions of the future. *The Revolution!* At every hour in those days that dread spectre confronted one; each morning on

waking a vague sense of oppression came with returning consciousness, and one asked oneself fearfully, "What has happened?" And then swiftly the answer flashed back, bringing a cold thrill to the heart: "The Revolution is going on—Paris is no longer Paris, but hell—evil spirits are loose there—all we love are in danger. Life as we once knew it, peaceful, secure, and kindly, is no more—henceforth anything may happen."

Such were the thoughts that filled Madame de Sabran's mind as with streaming eyes she took leave at last of her friend; who could tell if they would ever meet again; who in those dreadful days could ever say farewell to those they loved without wondering fearfully if this embrace was to be their last on earth?

Other aristocrats, whom Madame de Sabran met on her journey to Brussels were more hopeful of the future. They talked with certainty of the Comte d'Artois coming to the rescue of the royal family, of the armies that were to subdue the revolutionaries.

"This delirium," Madame de Sabran wrote sadly, "makes any one sad who, like myself, has lost all hope. Nothing but a miracle can save us—are we still in the age of miracles?"

She does not appear to have found the society of certain *émigrés* very congenial. Some, indeed, were far from loyal to their unhappy king, and still professed democratic views which naturally made Madame de Sabran indignant. With such people, however, she says, she made no secret of her contrary opinions: "I said just what I thought, as if all those who were listening to me thought the same. I find this much the best plan, for it shows other people that one believes them to be what they ought to be . . . ," and evidently she succeeded in shaming them into silence.

With every stage of her journey she longed more and more passionately to be back in Paris with the Chevalier:

"I cannot imagine what demon was able to blind

me to the extent of making me leave Paris in spite of all the horror with which it filled me. For, after all, you are everything to me, my child, and there were no troubles or vexations that your presence could not dispel at once. Now it is just the opposite; instead of finding rest in quiet places, I have never been so worried and unhappy. The thought of you torments me; you have become the centre of all my anxieties and cares, and these are a thousand times more unbearable than all those I left behind me, and which tortured me throughout the winter. . . . Think sometimes of our solitude together. Only death can put an obstacle in the way of so sweet a prospect, and I hope that my fate, cruel as it is, will grant me the consolation of dying in your arms. Good-bye, too dear friend."

"My eyes turn unceasingly towards my unhappy country, towards you, dear heart," she wrote to the Chevalier from Coblentz. "What course will you take? What will you do in all this? Think well, my child, whilst there is yet time, and do not forget that prudence is the mother of safety. It is impossible for me to give you counsel at this moment but your sense, your loyalty, and your courage will doubtless lead you aright. The great thing is that you should make yourself realize that this is not a story out of 'The Thousand and One Nights'—short of being a lunatic, one can no longer believe this. . . . Farewell, too dear friend. Since I left you I live only in the past. . . . Farewell, farewell. . . ."

On July 20 Madame de Sabran arrived at last at Rheinsberg, and Prince Henry of Prussia, anxious to do her all possible honour, set forth from his castle to meet her with eight magnificent horses which were to be harnessed to her carriage and bring her in triumph to his door. He had expected her to arrive in the immense travelling coach, that, according to the custom of the day, she used for long journeys, and was much surprised to find her in the small, unpretentious carriage she had chosen for leaving Paris on this occa-

sion in order to avoid exciting the animosity of the populace. The prince, however, was determined not to forego the pleasure of a magnificent arrival, and insisted on having all the eight horses harnessed in, whilst he himself went on foot before them.

Then the strangest scene took place, for the horses, finding so little weight behind them, started forward at a bound, and little Madame de Sabran and the two boys were carried along at a tremendous pace, the prince himself tearing madly through the dust on his short legs in order to avoid being run over.

Suddenly the prince called a halt.

" Here we are. We have arrived ! "

The carriage had stopped before the door of a small, unpretentious house.

" This is my castle ! " the prince repeated with a beaming smile.

The travellers looked bewildered, and the little man laughed delightedly at the success of his practical joke. The small house where they had stopped was the village inn, and they had thought for a moment that it was his wonderful, his magnificent castle of Rheinsberg !

Rheinsberg, when at last they reached it, really was magnificent, and its charms became immediately the subject of a fresh quarrel between Madame de Sabran and the Chevalier. Boufflers, longing to hear her impressions of the castle and its famous gardens, wrote, complaining that her letters since her arrival were *courtes, rares, et bêtes*—which was certainly very impolite of him. To this Madame de Sabran, naturally indignant, retorted : " You are colder, dryer, and more tiresome than politics themselves." (Tu es plus froid, plus sec, plus ennuyeux que la politique elle-même.) Then she proceeds sarcastically to answer his inquiries :

" I have described the gardens to you a hundred times, but you never read what I write. I have told

you about a beautiful lake that lies beneath my windows, the sight of which would calm the spirit of your madmen [evidently the members of the Assembly]: I have told you of a temple to Friendship to which I often go and make an offering, of a tomb to which I go for consolation, of a pyramid I go to admire. . . ."

She does not mention another curiosity of the château, a *salon* which Prince Henry had constructed to contain the busts of the four French people he admired the most. These were the Duc de Nivernais, the Marquis de Bouillé, La Fayette, and Madame de Sabran herself.

It was, as usual, not long before Madame de Sabran recovered from her fit of temper and forgave Boufflers for his.

" Je t'ai beaucoup gâté, mon enfant," she tells him. " I have spoilt you dreadfully, my child, and now, after the example of my dear fellow countrymen, I revolt, and intend to infringe your liberty, but only that of taking another wife, for I mean to give you up to nobody, cross as you are (tout maussade que tu es)."

It was at moments like these that Madame de Sabran showed her cleverness; though she did not hesitate to scold him soundly when she felt he deserved it, she never made the fatal mistake of boring him with continued reproaches. She always knew when to stop; always knew instinctively when a change of key should occur.

In the matter of holding a man's affection nothing, perhaps, is more important than this art of changing key. The woman who *harps* is lost. Whether she tells a man of his faults or of her love, to continue on the same note is to end by maddening him. Madame de Sabran never harped. If at one moment she gave way to tenderness the next she teased him, made him laugh or piqued him into jealousy—that most potent spur to love. So in this letter from Rheinsberg she tells him

maliciously of a charming old man who is one of the guests of Prince Henry, and, by an extraordinary coincidence, happens exactly to resemble her late husband, of whom Boufflers had always been furiously jealous.

" He is an old soldier, grown grey in warfare, full of honour and courage, like Monsieur de Sabran ; he stoops like he did, walks like he did, and loves me with all his heart—not, however, precisely like Monsieur de Sabran. . . . I hope he will still be here when you arrive so that you can see your rival, but I don't know whether you will put up with him any better than with a certain Monsieur R. at Spa, who made you so furious. I see you laugh, for this is a folly you disown ; but it does you great honour in my eyes."

To this Boufflers, piqued, amused, and fascinated, answered :

" You only are you, dear love [il n'y a que toi comme toi, cher amour], and yet you are not, for one moment is never like another, and all are charming. . . . I like to praise you to-day, my wife, another time if you wish it I will laugh at you ; but to-day I am so in love with you, so enraptured by you, so proud of you, so touched at your letter, that it would take very little to make me prostrate myself at your feet with even more sincerity and love than Monsieur Necker before his companion. . . ."[1]

Boufflers had need of all his light-heartedness at the time he wrote this letter, for events had moved forward in Paris with fearful rapidity. The fear of the *cabinet noir* made it impossible for him to tell Madame de Sabran much political news, and we can find no reference in his correspondence to the flight of Varennes that took place this summer, or of the outbreak of popular fury against the royal family that followed after. Insults rained upon the heads of the king and

[1] The admiration of Monsieur Necker for his highly unattractive wife provided constant amusement for Paris.

queen at this crisis, insults expressed in language so insanely foul that to glance into the pamphlets and revolutionary newspapers of this date is like a glimpse of hell. Where is the wit, the trenchant sarcasm, the deadly weapon of humour which until now the French had used with such brilliant effect? Vanished like a dream! In all the libels and lampoons of the revolutionary period there is never a gleam of wit, never a skilfully planted dart, never the faintest trace of French *esprit*—nothing but dull, witless, imbecile, obscene abuse.

Yet this was the moment chosen by the ever optimistic king to express his approval of the Revolution! The blood shed round his carriage on the return from Varennes, the insults of the crowd who spat in at the windows, all the unspeakable humiliations of that terrible drive failed to destroy the king's belief in the goodness of his people or his desire to make them happy. The letter he wrote to the Prince de Condé two months later (in which he repeated the words of his speech to the Assembly of the preceding April) shows the extraordinary attitude of his mind, and is all too little known by those who see in Louis XVI the opponent of democracy:

"My cousin, an immense revolution has taken place in your country. This revolution is nothing less than the abolition of a mass of abuses that have been accumulating for centuries through the ignorance of the people, the excessive power of the clergy, the despotism of ministers misusing the king's name, and the errors of every one. To-day everything is changed, these abuses no longer exist, and on their ruins a constitution has arisen, having for its base equality and liberty, which at the same time regenerates the nation, the monarchy, and my authority.

"The sovereign nation now has only citizens with equal rights, no despots but the law, no spokesmen but those public functionaries of which I am the first. There, in brief, is the Revolution.

"This new order of things has necessarily displeased those who, at first misguided, regretted their personal advantages attaching to the old government. . . .

"France is organized, order is re-established, the laws are carried out, and all citizens are placed beneath their protection. . . . I have adopted the Constitution, and I shall maintain it with all my power. And why should I not have adopted it? It will prevent the inevitable misfortunes that would, sooner or later, have been brought about by the abuses of the old régime. It is for my people's happiness and for mine. (Elle fait le bonheur du peuple, elle fait le mien.)"

Such was the king's summing up of the Revolution—a summing up that implacable enemies of the monarchy will characterize as an act of cowardly concession to public opinion. This theory might be tenable had he only expressed these views in a public speech, but when they are repeated in his private correspondence they may fairly be considered as the honest expression of his opinion.

Louis XVI was no coward, but his intelligence was of that elementary order which makes a man live entirely in the present, and this habitual concentration on the things that lay immediately before him, this detachment from the past or future, made him curiously helpless in a crisis. Any unusual situation found him unprepared, because he had never thought out how to meet it. So, when the people whom he loved and trusted howled at him he was speechless with bewilderment, but not with fear. For fear implies anticipation, and *Louis XVI never anticipated.* This was his most fatal characteristic, yet at the same time his unfailing support—it led him into danger, but also enabled him to face it calmly. At all the most frightful moments of his life he exhibited the same characteristic, that of seeing only what was before his eyes and never the potentialities of the situation.

So in his letter to the Prince de Condé he no doubt

expressed with perfect sincerity his opinion of the Revolution, but he did not anticipate what the Revolution might lead to. He was content to accept it, to forget the terrible experiences through which he had already passed, and to picture no further such experiences in the future. Full of confidence, he presented himself before the Assembly on September 14, to swear allegiance to the new Constitution; but when, at the first words he uttered, the Assembly insolently sat down, the situation once more took him by surprise and left him pale and helpless. No angry words sprang to his lips, no imperious gesture escaped him; he only knew he had been insulted, but had no weapons with which to defend himself. His faults were always of the head, never of the heart, and at this bitter moment his love for the queen brought him a sudden, rare flash of illumination in which he saw the future. "Ah, madame!" he cried, on his return to the Tuileries, "all is lost! And you witnessed this humiliation, you came to France for this. . . ." And the queen, with that mother instinct that was so strong a part of her nature, "fell on her knees with tears in her eyes and put her arms around him."[1]

All was indeed lost. France was rapidly passing into a condition of national dementia. Caricatures of the royal family and the clergy, resembling nothing so much as the efforts of madhouse inmates that we see sometimes reproduced in modern magazines, were displayed in the shops of Paris. The ashes of Voltaire were paraded through the city followed through the rain by tawdry nymphs and bedraggled muses, street-walkers dressed as Greek vestals, by actors, poets, cobblers, masquerading as priests of Apollo.

The Chevalier de Boufflers, looking on at the strange procession, must have felt a deep disgust at this burlesque in memory of the man with whom he had spent, long ago, those peaceful weeks at Ferney, the man

[1] "Mémoires of Madame Campan," p. 306.

who, for all his satires on the Court, would have writhed at the idea of becoming the idol of what he was wont to call " the *canaille.*"

Boufflers (who was now staying at the Hôtel de Biron with his cousin Amélie, the little Duchesse de Biron) found his illusions fast falling from him. The mantle of Mirabeau had descended on Danton—the paid agitator of Orleans—whilst in the Assembly no man of moderate opinions could make himself heard. Boufflers' own position was daily becoming more unendurable ; through the tropical heat of August and September the men of " the right " who had once dreamt of regenerating France struggled on wearily, but little hope was left them. France had entered on that restless period which for many years made up her history, when she tired of every form of government in turn. She was tired now of the Assembly that she had greeted with such raptures two years earlier.

" Happily for me, if not for France," Boufflers wrote to Madame de Sabran that September, " our reign is nearly ended, and whilst our sun, at the end of its course, is sinking towards the horizon, we see already in the twilight the new stars that are to shine on this unhappy country."

These " stars " were the members of the Legislative Assembly, who on the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly were to pave the way for the Convention and the Revolutionary Tribunal. It was to be *the reign of the little lawyer.* The men who had composed " the right " of the first Assembly, men of traditions, men of position, patriots in the true sense of the word, since they had voluntarily relinquished all the privileges attaching to the old régime, were all to be excluded, and their places occupied by men drawn almost entirely from the *petite bourgeoisie,* who had nothing to lose and everything to gain by fanning the flame of revolution. Almost all were impecunious ; " it is

[1] "History of the Revolution," by von Sybel, vol. i. p. 114.

calculated," says a memoir of the period, " that they have not between them 300,000 francs in incomes." Nothing is more disastrous for a country than to be ruled by men who have *nothing to lose*. Such rulers, feeling their spell of power dependent on the changing will of the populace, and their position consequently precarious, can feel none of the security enjoyed by the statesman who at the end of his political career has a position of his own to which he can retire. To the man who, on leaving public life, has to return to the nothingness whence he sprung, the temptation to political jugglery is enormous ; he dreads the prospect of sinking into obscurity, and cannot but realize that his one chance of making his position secure is to bring off some *coup* that will make him the idol of the people, and this often at the expense of his own convictions and the best interests of the State.

France of 1791 in the throes of revolution responded only to *coups de théâtre*. It was here that the political adventurers saw their opportunity—to be popular one must be daring, reckless, startling, if necessary sanguinary in order to satisfy the people's craving for excitement—the *bête populaire* was aroused, and the men who would have soothed it had no chance against the men who would minister to its passions. In Maximilien Robespierre, foremost amongst the " stars " of the Jacobin Club, it found a legislator after its own heart. " Filled with atrabilious impressions against all around him," [1] he lent himself readily to the will of the " beast," and so, as time went on, Robespierre and the populace reacted on each other till both were lashed to frenzy. For the " beast " had tasted blood, and cried out for more—then Robespierre gave it blood, and yet more blood, until at last, sated with the spectacle, it turned and thrust him beneath the blade he had erected for its pleasure.

What hope was there for a humanitarian to make

[1] " Mémoires de Garat."

his voice heard at such a crisis? The Chevalier de Boufflers, going out for the last time from the door of the Assembly at four o'clock on that memorable September afternoon, realized finally the ending of his dreams.

It was the bitterest moment of his life—a moment of gigantic disillusionment shared by many ardent spirits of his day who had seen in the beginnings of the Revolution the dawning of the great Regeneration. He had joined in the new movement that glittering May day of 1789, when first he took his place in the States-General, full of pride and hope and fervent patriotism. For two years he had worked calmly and patiently at the great task of reform, now cast down, now nerving himself to fresh effort; but all had been in vain. His very impartiality had been his undoing; always boldly royalist, he had nevertheless lent his support to democratic schemes for bettering the condition of the people, and together with Malouet, Virieu, and others he had founded the "Club des Impartiaux" with the object of lowering the price of bread and counteracting the propaganda of Robespierre. By this means he succeeded merely in incurring the unpopularity that usually overtakes the moderate man in times of ferment—the demagogues who wished to destroy everything considered him an obstructionist, whilst the extreme conservatives could not forgive him his sympathy with the democratic movement. So he had failed, had accomplished nothing, the great enterprise of his life had ended in disillusionment and despair.

"J'ai toujours eu la fantaisie des révolutions!" How the words spoken in his impetuous youth mocked him at this moment! He had believed in revolutions, had gone on believing in *this* revolution, whilst all the while the woman he loved had foretold disaster. He remembered the strange prophetic words she had written to him, the veiled clairvoyante look that had come into her eyes when she talked of the future. At

this bitter moment he knew where to turn for consolation. He would go to her—to the woman whose wise philosophy had never failed to bring balm to his troubled spirit, and in that farmhouse of the Vosges they would forget the world and all its disillusionments.

He set forth almost immediately from Paris, and in the words he wrote her we read the epitome of Boufflers' life : *Tout m'a trompé excepté l'amour !*

. . . . .

The Chevalier's intention, on leaving Paris, was first to secure the farmhouse in the Vosges and then to bring Madame de Sabran from Rheinsberg to share it with him; but once more his plans were frustrated, for no sooner had he taken possession of his little house than it was confiscated by the revolutionaries as the property of an *émigré*.

Nor was he able to carry out his project of joining Madame de Sabran, for when he reached Germany he found that she had left Rheinsberg on a journey to Denmark and Sweden with Elzéar, Charles de Mellet, and, to make a fourth, the oddest of travelling companions—the famous Baron de Munchausen.

Gustavus III of Sweden, who had become a friend of Madame de Sabran's long ago at Versailles, was anxious that she should come to Stockholm, where he was preparing magnificent fêtes in her honour; but she was obliged to decline this invitation for fear of offending Prince Henry of Prussia, who did not like his nephew, the King of Sweden, and resented the idea of Madame de Sabran staying away from Rheinsberg in order to visit him. It was fortunate for her that she did not go to Stockholm, for she would certainly have been present at the fatal ball when the king was basely struck down by the knife of an assassin. Meanwhile Prince Henry had written affectionately to Boufflers saying : " Venez dans mes bras ! " and in December Madame de Sabran returned to Rheinsberg to await his arrival. The Chevalier, hastening towards her, was

counting the days till their meeting—" after that," he wrote, " no more griefs or sorrows ; it seems to me that you are coming nearer, and that, slim as you are, I can see you on the horizon. I see you at Rheinsberg and I join you, never to part again, but to make of you a second self who will atone for all the imperfections of the first, who will make all troubles bearable and all pleasures delicious, who will obliterate for me regret for the past, weariness in the present, and anxiety for the future."

If a " second self," why not a wife ? How was it that Boufflers did not now propose to marry Madame de Sabran ? It would certainly seem the psychological moment at which to take this belated step, yet it does not seem to have appeared so to Boufflers. The explanation is probably that, from his point of view, the obstacle of their marriage—the disparity in their positions—remained as great as ever. Owing to the Revolution, and the suppression of his ecclesiastical *dîmes*, he was now more impecunious than before, and, having failed in his political career, he had still no " glory " to atone for his want of fortune. Madame de Sabran, on the other hand, had so far lost neither her house nor her income, and Boufflers, hoping that before long she would be able to return to France and find them both intact, thought this no moment to alter the nature of their relationship to each other. So they remained on at Rheinsberg awaiting developments and little dreaming the length of time that must elapse before their exile would be ended.

In this way months, and eventually years, went by. Of this period we know very little, for the manuscripts relating to it are still unpublished [1] ; but, whatever befell them, their thoughts during the three terrible years that followed their emigration were most of all with those they had left behind them in their unhappy

[1] These MSS. are the property of Monsieur Gaston Maugras, who intends to publish them after the war.

country. Delphine and Armand were still there, with their children; the Chevalier's sister, Madame de Boisgelin, and his aunt, the Maréchale de Mirepoix; his cousin Amélie, the Duchesse de Biron, and besides these were the dear old Duc de Nivernais, the gentle Comtesse Auguste, and so many others who in the old days had met at the pretty house of the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré—so many they were fated never to see again!

And, since it was in the lives of these they lived, it is now their fortunes that we must follow.

CHAPTER IV

A BUTTERFLY IN THE STORM

THE de Custines, it will be remembered, were ardent democrats and still in 1792 their belief in the Revolution remained unshaken. Delphine, whilst dabbling in philosophy and the new ideas on social reform, was still a mere butterfly, and continued to enjoy herself in Paris as if no world-shaking crisis were in progress. "On y est si bien," she wrote to her mother soon after Madame de Sabran had emigrated, "je vous assure qu'on s'y amuse beaucoup!"

On the outbreak of war with Austria, General de Custine, finding himself, like Boufflers, excluded from the Assembly, returned to the army and was sent to the Rhine under the Duc de Biron. Meanwhile Armand, though only twenty-two, was entrusted with a diplomatic mission to Germany with the object of dissuading the Duke of Brunswick from marching against France, and at the same moment the Comte de Ségur arrived in Berlin in the hope of detaching the King of Prussia from the coalition. Both having failed to achieve their purpose, de Ségur proposed to Armand de Custine to come to Berlin, where the Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran were staying. Boufflers, at this crisis, showed himself once more no sycophant, for though it was of great importance to him to retain the favour of Frederick William, he did not hesitate to show his friendship for de Ségur, whom the king had received very coldly. Moreover, he told the king boldly his opinion of the schemes for marching to the

rescue of Louis XVI—" he had the rare courage," says de Ségur, " to tell the truth to the King of Prussia and to reveal the future to him. He warned him that he would exasperate the people instead of calming them, and that he would compromise the life of a monarch whom he wished to save." Frederick William, who was already the friend of Madame de Sabran, had the good sense to respect Boufflers for his outspokenness and became his friend also from this moment.

For Madame de Sabran's sake the king had welcomed her son-in-law to Berlin, and Armand made many friends there; but, having failed in his mission, he felt it his duty to return to France and report the result of his journey to the Government. In vain Madame de Sabran implored him to refrain from placing himself at the mercy of such a Government—his friend, de Kalkreuth, almost threw himself at his feet and begged him not to go, telling him, with terrifying accuracy, the fate that might await him; but Armand de Custine knew no fear. " I was sent here," he said, " by this Government, and my duty is to return and render an account of my mission to those who entrusted me with it. I will do my duty."

" So," his son wrote of him, " he carried out the ancient device of his family: ' Fais ce que doys, advienge que pourra.' "

" Whatever happens in France," " Madame de Créquy " remarks, " it is always very difficult not to count a little on the justice of the Government. The word ' government ' always represents to our minds a certain idea of protection, of helpful equity and good-will that comes of long usage." It was precisely under the influence of this delusion that this noble and ill-fated boy set forth for France. His wife and the two little boys were still in Paris when he arrived there, but he found little consolation in Delphine at this crisis. That blissful honeymoon of only five years ago when they had been all in all to each other, seemed now but a dream.

and they had drifted far apart. Armand, able, as we have seen, to act as ambassador at only twenty-two, was strangely old and serious for his years, whilst Delphine remained a perpetual child, whose love of amusement led her into endless flirtations—she simply could not resist the excitement of watching man after man fall a victim to her beauty.

Madame de Sabran, no less than Armand, regretted Delphine's folly ; she wished Delphine would be more unapproachable, more fastidious. She herself, in her youth, remarks Monsieur de Croze, "had always kept her lovers at a respectful distance, and later on he would have been a bold man who attempted to supplant the Chevalier de Boufflers. But with Madame de Custine a coxcomb might have hopes (un fat pourrait espérer)"; in fact, as Delphine frankly admitted, this was the sort of man who amused her the most.

But this summer a sad event occurred to sober her—at any rate for the moment. She had reluctantly allowed her children to be vaccinated—an innovation against which she had always been prejudiced. Her fears proved only too well founded, for two days later Gaston, the eldest, developed small-pox, and all the medical skill of the day was powerless to save his life. Delphine was heart-broken, but even this tragedy did nothing to draw the husband and wife nearer to each other, and soon after, Armand, realizing there was no place for him in political life, left Paris and joined his father in the army of the Rhine.

General de Custine was now engaged in the difficult task of putting down insubordination in the army—where discipline had been undermined by democratic doctrines—whilst at the same time promulgating fresh democratic theories of equality and universal brotherhood. Marching on Mayence, he proclaimed himself a "citizen-general," whose only desire was to fight in the cause of liberty :

"The war we are making to-day," he declared, "is

very different from those that have taken place hitherto, and is only directed against the usurpers of power and not against the people. . . . War on the palaces of usurpers ! Peace to cottages, to just men ! "

Already this effect of the Revolution was apparent—national spirit had given way to party spirit, and the enemy was no longer the foreign aggressor, but the man who was rich or powerful.

Much has been written about the " patriotism " of the revolutionary leaders, especially Danton, whose exclamation of " De l'audace, et encore de l'audace ! " towards the invading Prussians has stirred the blood of succeeding generations. But it should be remembered that on the occasion of Danton's famous outburst the Prussians were marching to the rescue of the monarchy, and it was as the enemies of the Republic, not as the enemies of France, that Danton and his followers were determined to oppose them. Danton may or may not have been patriotic; the fact remains that it was very much to his private interest to keep the Prussians out of France, now that the monarchy had been overthrown, for their arrival would certainly have meant the ending of his power. In order, therefore, to judge of the precise degree of patriotism displayed by the revolutionary leaders, one should observe their attitude towards the Prussians whilst they were still uncertain whether the Prussians were going to help or oppose their schemes. " Madame de Créquy " goes so far as to state that at this stage the revolutionaries were actually in league with Prussia :

" The commune had undertaken to pay Prussia a subsidy of two millions a month in order to obtain its neutrality. *This treaty still exists*, and some of the leaders even wished to have the Duke of Brunswick elected King of France instead of the Duc d'Orléans. . . . If the King of Prussia again took up arms against France it was because the Republicans either could not, or would not, fulfil the pecuniary conditions on which

they had agreed, and I assure you that all these manœuvres of Prussia in 1792 were unparalleled in infamy."[1]

The policy of Prussia has always been to take advantage of the internal troubles of other nations, and to encourage abroad the subversive ideas that she puts down with an iron hand at home ; it is quite in keeping with this policy that she should have entered into negotiations with the revolutionary leaders, for she knew that the overthrow of the monarchy of France would in all probability prove the undoing of her rival.

" Madame de Créquy's " statements may be attributed to " aristocratic prejudice," yet General de Custine's speeches during this campaign of 1792 certainly tend to confirm the theory that the leaders of the Revolution were at this stage far from regarding the Prussians as their enemies.

" I have come to Germany," Custine announced at Frankfurt, " to offer to the people the alliance of the French Republic, and to make known to oppressors that the French, having become free, have only one desire and one wish—that of protecting the weak and of making the unjustly opulent man feel that men born to equal rights should not wear the yoke of the rich man."

The Convention applauded these words—the same Convention that, headed by Danton, this same year justified the massacres of September on the plea of saving the " patrie " from the menace of the invading Prussians.

It is hardly surprising that an aristocrat, capable of making such speeches as these, should be regarded with distrust by his own kind. Madame de Sabran, indeed, broke with him altogether ; but Delphine who had none of her mother's insight, saw nothing alarming in the political situation, and resolutely stood by her husband

[1] "Mémoires of Madame de Créquy," vol. viii. p. 132.

and his father. Perhaps, too, she understood the general better than the aristocrats who regarded him as a traitor to his class, and saw beneath the bombast of his speeches the real nobility and disinterestedness of his nature. For all his democratic theories, Custine could not sympathize with the excesses of the revolutionaries, and he showed himself as incautious in his condemnation of these as he had been unwise in his expressions of approval earlier. At the news contained in the papers that reached him from France he made no attempt to conceal his disgust—even in the presence of members of the Convention—and when at last, in January 1793, he heard of the execution of Louis XVI he gave way to a fatal burst of feeling :

" I have served my country to defend it from foreign invasion, but who can fight for the men who are governing us to-day ? "

These words, repeated to Robespierre by Merlin de Thionville, brought about Custine's downfall. He was recalled to Paris on the pretext of his defeats at Mayence and Valenciennes, and arrived there the day after Charlotte Corday had been led to her death for ridding the world of a monster. He was joined at once by Armand, whose health had given way after two campaigns, and who had returned to Paris some months earlier. Delphine, with Astolphe and his nurse, was away in Normandy, staying with Armand's sister, the Marquise de Dreux-Brézé.

At first all seemed hopeful ; the general, still a popular hero, was received with acclamations by the Parisians, and everywhere he went cries of " Vive Custine ! " followed him ; but even the voice of the Sovereign People was powerless to save him from the vengeance of the Tribunal, and on July 26 he was arrested and imprisoned at the Abbaye. A few days later he was transferred to the Conciergerie to await his trial. Hearing this in Normandy, Delphine de Custine instantly decided that it was her duty to be with her husband and his

father, and she started immediately for Paris, leaving Astolphe and his nurse Nanette to follow her a few days later.

. . . . .

In the dampest and dreariest cell of the prison known in those dreadful days as the "Ante-chamber of Death," General de Custine sat staring hopelessly at the light flickering through the bars of the window, that opened on to the Cour des Femmes. From this narrow courtyard came from time to time the sound of women's voices and the light click of high-heeled slippers over the rough paving-stones. Just outside was the small stone fountain where every morning the amazing women of the Revolution, light-hearted even in the shadow of the guillotine, laughed as they washed and wrung out their clothes—those poor, linen gowns and muslin fichus to which they still contrived to impart an air of freshness and of coquetry. Here in this narrow space, between the grim prison walls bounded at one end by the iron gate through which sooner or later all must expect to pass to her death, they moved as lightly, talked as gaily as in the Galerie des Glaces. The Cour de Femmes in those days, says an eye-witness, was like a flower-bed framed in iron—"un parterre émaillé de fleurs mais encadré de fer."

But on this August day of 1793 there were as yet few women prisoners at the Conciergerie, for though the Revolutionary Tribunal had been at work for nearly six months the great "Terror" had not yet begun, the guillotine still worked slowly—far too slowly to satisfy the monster, Fouquier, in his lair of the Tour d'Argent. However, as he remarked: "The people must be pleased; the guillotine is going, and she will go better still." (Le peuple doit être content; la guillotine marche, elle marchera et ça ira encore mieux.)

He, too, had once hoped to please the people, the old soldier who now sat looking at the summer sunlight through the bars of his prison. His thoughts at this

moment were very bitter. It was for this he had striven, for this he had fought, had inveighed with so much eloquence against the aristocrats, had raised the cry of liberty—to find himself alone between these four stone walls, the victim of a tyranny far more atrocious than any he had sought to destroy. And, as he sat there, the once fiery general now a crushed and broken man, the key grated in the immense lock of the dungeon door. He looked up wearily, prepared only to see the brutal face of his jailer, and then rose suddenly to his feet with a cry of joy. For, with a gentle rush, a dazzling flash of light and beauty, as a white butterfly might flutter into a tomb, Delphine came towards him, Delphine, " Queen of the Roses," in her muslin gown, her golden hair gleaming like sunshine in the darkness of the cell. The next moment her soft young arms were round his neck, her fresh cheek was pressed to his rough old face.

The general could hardly contain himself for joy. He was convinced that her arrival would save him. What judges, however relentless, could resist the lovely Delphine? Would not even the heart of Fouquier-Tinville melt before her beauty and devotion?

Meanwhile Armand was making every effort to secure his father's release. Careless of the danger to himself, he had placards put up all over Paris declaring the general's innocence of the charges brought against him, hoping by this means to enlist the people's sympathy in favour of the man they had so lately applauded. But the people were now tired of their idol, and made no attempt to save him from the Tribunal, whilst the luckless Armand merely succeeded in bringing down the wrath of Robespierre on his own head. Before the general's trial had ended he was arrested and thrown into La Force.

It was now that Delphine, foolish, flirting Delphine, came out in a new light. Whilst Armand had been prosperous and happy, she had allowed herself to

drift away from him, but now that he had fallen on evil days all her real goodness of heart asserted itself and she came back to him once more. Every day she left her flat in the Rue de Bourbon, where she was living with little Astolphe, and hurried first to the Conciergerie to see the general, then to La Force to sit with Armand in his cell. Escorted by a friend of her husband's, Monsieur Guy de Chaumont Quitry—with his hair short and unpowdered and wearing a red cap and a carmagnole, so as to appear like a man of the people—she arrived daily at the Palais de Justice, braving the mob of howling furies that collected on the steps to jeer at the prisoners brought before the Tribunal. Besides these furies—mostly women from the fish-market transformed by evil passions out of all semblance to human beings—were also men of horrible appearance, the paid assassins who had taken part in the massacres of September, and who now gathered round the doorway waiting for orders to carry out their dreadful task once more.

Delphine knew all this; she understood the risk she ran every time she came here, but she had taken to herself the motto of the de Custines, and, believing it to be her duty, she never faltered. Sometimes as early as six o'clock in the morning she was at the Conciergerie, waiting in the stone passage that led from the general's cell to the hall of the Tribunal to throw her arms round the old man's neck and whisper words of hope; she was with him as he took his place before his judges, sitting on a stool at his feet and listening with swimming eyes to the unjust charges brought against him. At the sight of this lovely girl, so young, so charming, and so devoted, even the men who made up the dread Tribunal showed some sign of weakening, and Hébert angrily accused them of allowing themselves to be seduced by the *beaux yeux* of Madame de Custine. But there was no sign of relenting in the face of Fouquier-Tinville!

A writer of the period who liked to find comparisons between certain men and animals, has described Danton's face as that of a mastiff, Marat's as that of a vulture; Mirabeau, he says, had the head of a lion, whilst Robespierre was like a cat—a tame, domestic cat, in repose, which under the influence of emotion changed into a wild-cat and finally into a tiger-cat when inflamed with fury. Fouquier, vilest of all the demons whom the powers of darkness had let loose on suffering humanity, must more than anything have resembled a stoat, with his evil eyes placed close together on each side of the pointed nose, watching with ferocious delight the sufferings of his victims. Like a stoat, he loved to see his prey trembling before him, and with all a stoat's tenacity of purpose he would never relinquish it for the sake of other prey that lay at hand.

Delphine, looking into that horrible face, saw no flicker of pity such as the General had hoped to find there. Fouquier was not the man to be touched by youth or beauty; in Delphine de Custine he saw only his prey, and he determined savagely that she should not escape him. Yet even those furies who had once been women, sitting at the back of the Tribunal, felt some faint thrill of humanity steal into their withered hearts at the sight of her. A murmur ran along them: "Ah! but she has courage—la Custine!" And when Delphine turned her frank blue eyes on them in a sudden mute appeal to such tenderness as they might still possess the furies melted into tears. At that, Fouquier, enraged, fearing that "the People" whose "docile instrument" he professed to be might rob him of his prey, sent secret orders to the assassins on the steps of the Tribunal to do their worst.

Delphine, all unconscious of what was passing, walked out at the end of the sitting to find herself confronted by a sea of angry faces, and heard, as Marie Antoinette had heard that October morning on the balcony of the Cour de Marbre, that sound which is said to strike

terror into the heart of the strongest—the harsh roar of an infuriated mob. For a moment she stood there, her white face framed in its golden hair, at the head of the long flight of steps leading down from the Palace to the street. "Timid as a fawn," says Astolphe, she had always had a dread of crowds, and here she was alone in the midst of the most terrifying crowd the world has ever seen. No one dared to stand by her. With a beating heart she remembered that other woman—slight and fair like herself—the Princesse de Lamballe, who had been torn limb from limb by these same furies. The princess had missed her footing—that had been her undoing. "If I, too, slip, if I fall as she did, it is all over with me!" she told herself fearfully, as the evil-smelling mob closed around her.

"It is the Custine! the daughter of the traitor!" shrieked the voices of the furies with horrible oaths and curses added, and at this moment men with bared arms and naked swords pushed the women aside and came towards Delphine. At this sight she pressed her fingers to her teeth and bit them till they bled, lest she should grow paler and show her fear. Suddenly her glance fell on one of the women standing near her in the crowd—a horrible-looking fish-hag with a baby in her arms. On the inspiration of the moment, Delphine turned towards her and in her charming voice—"that voice of silver," says Astolphe, "at once touching and sonorous"—she said gently:

"What a pretty child you have there!"

The effect was magical.

"Take it!" the mother whispered, holding the baby towards her, "take it in your arms, and you can give it back to me at the foot of the steps." Delphine was saved! With a baby in her arms not a fury would touch her! Kissing the child's face, she made her way through the crowd that, with swords lowered and angry murmurs hushed, let her pass through them to the carriage that was waiting for her in the street below. There at the

door she handed the child back to its mother in silence. Neither could speak, but each looked into the other's eyes and understood. " Ces deux âmes de mères," says Astolphe, " devaient se retrouver ailleurs."

Little Astolphe was now back in Paris with his nurse, Nanette. Nanette Malriat, a native of Nidervillers, where her father was employed in General de Custine's china factory, was a character. Far from sharing the de Custines' sympathy with the Revolution, Nanette was, in the language of the day, violently " aristocratic," a term applied to people of all classes who believed in the old régime. Unfortunately, she simply could not conceal her fury and disgust at the revolutionaries.

The death of Marat at the hand of Charlotte Corday had occurred just before Nanette's arrival in Paris, and one day soon after her return she was walking out with Astolphe in the Carrousel when she came upon a crowd assembled round an altar that had been erected there in honour of the " friend of the people." Upon this altar, decorated with national flags and plaster busts and wreaths of oak-leaves, lay a priceless vase of agate, wherein reposed the heart of Marat whom the people—now obviously the victims of dementia—had elected to deify. A self-appointed priest in a scarlet coat was holding forth to the assembled worshippers who knelt around him, bowing their heads and making the sign of the cross at the name of the new divinity. " O sacred heart of Marat ! " cried the priest. " Friend of the people ! Jesus was only a false prophet, but Marat is a God ! O Marat ! long live the heart of Marat ! "

Then, with a roll of drums, the congregation broke into a hymn :

" Marat, du peuple le vengeur ! "

Nanette Malriat, looking on at all this, was so sickened with disgust at such foul blasphemy that at last she could contain herself no longer. Forgetting for the moment all about little Astolphe whom she was holding

in her arms, she rushed up to one of the kneeling women and began to scold her violently, pouring forth floods of invective against this new and horrible form of worship. In an instant she was surrounded, a crowd of furies closed in upon her from all sides, and the angry cry went up from a hundred mouths :

" The aristocrat to the lantern ! "

Nanette, clasping Astolphe to her breast, defended herself as best she could under a hail of blows ; she fell . . . then, scrambling to her feet again, attempted to evade her assailants—in vain ! They seized the child from her arms, and, holding her by the hair, they dragged her towards the great street lantern that hung at the corner of the Rue de Niçaise. . . .

Suddenly one of the crowd, a man who had appeared more enraged than all the rest, bent towards her under cover of the tumult and whispered some words into her ear :

" You are a lunatic—don't you understand ? I will take care of your child, and you must pretend to be mad, or you will be killed ! "

Nanette understood. Immediately she began to sing loudly, to dance, to make faces of the most grotesque kind imaginable.

" She is a mad woman ! " cried her protector and instantly other voices took up the cry :

" She is mad, she is mad ! Let her pass ! "

Up flew the lantern, the crowd fell away, and Nanette went wildly prancing up the street, singing and grimacing, dancing across the Pont-Royal, dancing to the corner of the Rue du Bac, where her rescuer, with Astolphe in his arms, awaited her. And, at the sight of him, the mad woman suddenly ceased her dancing and fell in a dead faint at his feet.

Yet even this experience did not teach Nanette prudence, for only a few days later she narrowly escaped arrest by making a violent tirade against General de Custines's accusers. She was on her way through the

market when she met street-criers calling out atrocious insults about the "traitor Custine." This was more than she could bear, and, making her way towards them through the crowd, she overwhelmed them with angry remonstrances.

"What do you dare to say against General de Custine? All lies, I tell you! I was born at his home and brought up by him, so I know him better than you do! He is my master, and he is worth all of you put together, do you hear? And if he had chosen he could have come with his army and put an end to your rascally Revolution, and now you would all be licking his boots instead of insulting him—cowards that you are!"

Undismayed by the ferocious rabble by which she was surrounded, she pursued her way right into the Place de la Révolution, inveighing against the injustice of the Tribunal's decrees.

Strange to say, nothing was done to Nanette in return for this display of feeling. Courage, indeed, often succeeded better in those days than excessive caution, and the cowards who protested before the Tribunal their allegiance to the Republic and swore they had never regretted their dead king fared no better than the brave men and women who went on to the last, boldly crying: "Vive le roi!" But all the courage of Delphine, of Armand and of poor Nanette was powerless to save the general's life.

One evening, the evening of August 1, the jailer entered and ordered him to follow him to a different cell. This one was needed for another prisoner.

Who could that other prisoner be? This cell, the general knew, was the worst in all the prison, and, as such, assigned to "the traitor Custine." Was there then a greater criminal than himself? Or had the efforts of Delphine availed to soften the Tribunal? As he followed the jailer to his new cell, which by comparison with the old one was comfortable and airy, a faint ray of hope stole into his heart. And then he fell to wonder-

ing who that other unhappy prisoner could be. He was soon to know.

Night fell on the Conciergerie, that hell in miniature, a heavy, breathless night, charged with pestilential odours from the dungeons where weary prisoners tossed on dirty straw or wretched pallet beds. From time to time gruesome sounds broke on their ears—the howling of the jailers' dogs, the groans of fellow-sufferers, now and again the piteous scream of a sleeper who in dreams had anticipated the fate awaiting him. "You who have never spent a night there, in the midst of all these horrors," one of the victims [1] wrote long afterwards, "you have endured nothing; you have never suffered in this world."

The hours of darkness crept by on leaden feet—the clocks of the neighbouring churches gave out three solemn strokes. And then suddenly a loud knocking was heard on the great doors of the prison and men's hearts stood still for fear. Were not those the butt-ends of guns hammering on the thick wooden panels?

Immediately jailers hurried to the entrance and threw open the doors. Outside in the night where the stars were paling in the first gleam of a sickly dawn, a hired coach was drawn up, surrounded by a horde of ruffians with red caps on their matted hair, carrying muskets. Then, from the high step of the coach, a tall woman descended dressed in trailing black, and, followed closely by the armed men, walked imperiously through the doorway of the prison. Soldiers, policemen, jailers closed around her, and after a moment's discussion led their prisoner down the long dark passage to the cell that had been Custine's. Silently she made her way in her light satin slippers over the paving-stones, her ragged black dress sweeping round her feet, her head held high as ever. Out of the blackness of her widow's cap her face loomed dazzling in its whiteness; white, too, was the once fair hair on each side of the smooth

[1] The Comte de Beugnot.

forehead that showed a faint red mark where she had struck herself against the doorway of her prison at the Temple. They had asked her whether she was hurt, and she had answered no—" Nothing can hurt me any more." She had reached the limit of human suffering.

So she passed through the door of her cell and " her eyes contemplated with amazement the horrible nakedness of the room." Yet even this had little power to hurt her; through it all—the dirt, the damp, the stifling heat of the August night, she saw one vision only —a little fair-haired boy wearing on his tangled curls the cap of liberty, dragged at the heels of the foul-mouthed cobbler, Simon. Thus, two days ago, she had seen him for the last time—her little son, torn from her for ever. After that, as she had said, nothing in this world could hurt her any more.

. . . . .

Delphine de Custine, coming next morning to the prison, turned her steps as usual towards the black corridor leading to the cell where till now she had visited her father-in-law, but to her surprise the jailer gruffly bade her follow him in another direction and led her to the comfortable room where the general had been placed. Finding him in these better quarters, she broke into a cry of joy. Had the Tribunal, then, at last relented? But the stricken face of the old man froze the smile on her lips.

" They changed my cell," he said brokenly, " because it was the worst in the prison, and it was needed—for the queen."

Truculent democrat that he was, this last barbarity of the revolutionaries cut him to the heart. He remembered that winter, years ago, when he had gaily lost 300,000 francs at the queen's card-parties and had been one of her most ardent adorers. He could see her still as she moved through those gorgeous rooms in all her dazzling youth and beauty, " like an aerial being, all

brightness and grace "—the young queen whom then "ten thousand swords would have leaped from their scabbards" to defend. And now? Now she sat alone and deserted between those four damp walls, behind those iron bars at which he himself had gazed so despairingly. The Tribunal's injustice to himself had roused his indignation, but this heart-rending picture had brought home to him, as nothing else could have done, the atrocious nature of the men whom he had once regarded as the saviours of France.

What must have been the thoughts of Delphine de Custine as she, too, looked back on those old days at Versailles and remembered that gay supper-party when Marie Antoinette had stood behind the chairs of "Iphigenia" and "Orestes," bringing them food with her own hands and laughing at Elzéar's precocious wit. How she had loved those two children! How charmingly she had always welcomed them and their mother at the Court! Of all Delphine's chaotic emotions her affection for "petite Mé"—as she was wont to call her mother—was the deepest and most lasting, and as she made her way out of the Conciergerie that sad August morning I think the memory of the unhappy queen's love for "petite Mé" must have been the strongest claim to her sympathy.

All hope of saving General de Custine's life was now at an end, and on August 27 he was condemned to death by the Tribunal. The evening before he died, Delphine was allowed to come and say good-bye to him; after that he spent the night in prayer and confession. It was said by onlookers that there were tears in his eyes as he drove to the scaffold—tears, perhaps, of bitter disillusionment. He was dying at the hands of "the People"—"the People" for whom he had worked and fought, for whom he had sacrificed his good name. The aristocrats hated him no less than the revolutionaries; it would have taken very little, says Astolphe, to make them come out of hiding and join in the Mar-

seillaise with joy at his condemnation—in their eyes he was a traitor to his class, whilst in the eyes of the populace he was a traitor to the Republic. He was paying now heavily for his mistakes. "I do not know how I shall conduct myself at the last moment," he had written to his son the night before; "one must have reached it before one can answer for oneself." When that moment came his courage did not fail him. Kissing the crucifix at the foot of the scaffold, he mounted the steps firmly and met his end.

The queen spent forty days and nights in the cell that had been Custine's, then thirty-five in the one shown to tourists as the "cachot de la Reine," next to the chapel of the prison, after which her sufferings ended. Yet even this long-drawn-out torture did not avail to temper the hatred of her enemies.

There is no hatred so implacable as that of envy. The hatred inspired by an injury may vent itself in retaliation or be overcome by the spirit of forgiveness, the hatred of contempt may be dispelled by pity, the hatred of antipathy be bridged over by better understanding, but the hatred of human nature for the object of its envy is relentless, and even when it sees the hated one crushed into the dust at its feet it will never be appeased, will not abate a fraction of its rancour or ever cry out in pity, "Hold, it is enough!" So the *tricoteuses*, as Marie Antoinette, broken and humbled, her beauty gone, her hair whitened and her eyes dim with suffering, passed by them on her way to the scaffold, knew no relenting. She had once been beautiful, once been happy, once driven in her gilded coach whilst they went on foot through the mire, and no vengeance could ever satisfy them or moderate their hatred. She had suffered as no woman before or since has ever suffered, yet still they prayed that she would continue to suffer hereafter.

All through the winter months that followed the deaths of his father and the queen, Armand de Custine

remained in prison at La Force and every day Delphine came and spent long hours with him in his cell. Did they think, those two, so young and helpless amidst the immense tragedy in which they were involved, of the happy days only six years ago when all the world seemed gay? Sitting together between these prison walls, did they remember the September morning when they had watched the sun rise over Mont Blanc and had sat side by side, "so close, so close," thinking only of love and the golden present? "One cannot know in spring-time what will happen in summer, in autumn, or in winter; at their age they only see the flowers, they do not wonder whether they will last, they do not think there may be thorns. . . ." So Madame de Sabran had written, little dreaming how cruel was the path of thorns this gentle boy she loved as her own son must tread on his way to the grave. Armand had never been a strong character; to the imperious Delphine he had shown himself too yielding; but now at this supreme moment a new strength came to him, and he faced death with all the calmness of a Stoic philosopher. This was the strange anomaly of those terrible days—the amazing courage of the apparently irresponsible; for even Delphine, a creature of moods and fancies, who had lived only for the moment, showed no want of purpose at this crisis, and brought her husband all that mother-love of which the lightest woman is capable. Her only thought now was to save him from the Tribunal, for there was no longer any hope of his acquittal.

Now every day when Delphine left La Force after her visits to Armand she was led to the entrance by Louise, the daughter of the *concierge*, who was employed to let the friends of prisoners out of the gate. She was a pretty, kind-hearted girl, and Delphine, absorbed in her scheme for rescuing Armand, decided to confide it to Louise. At first Louise would have nothing to do with it, but when Delphine, growing desperate, offered

her a large sum of money as a reward, she consented at last to help her, and every afternoon, as the two girls walked to the gate together, they discussed their plan in eager undertones. It would be quite simple, they agreed: Armand, fair and slim, with his almost effeminate beauty, would easily pass in the dusk as a girl; he must put on Delphine's clothes in his cell, while Delphine put on some belonging to Louise, who was also fair and fresh, and not unlike Delphine in appearance. Then, whilst Louise slipped out of the prison by a back staircase, Armand and Delphine would go out of the gate together and in the twilight of the January afternoon the guards would never notice they were not the two girls they were accustomed to see pass before them daily. Meanwhile, Monsieur de Chaumont Quitry, with the 30,000 francs promised to Louise, was to wait for them in the street, and once there they would all drive away together.

The day before this plan was to be carried out they rehearsed the whole scene in Armand's cell amidst breathless excitement. All went well, and Delphine left the prison full of hope for the success of the morrow's venture.

That same evening a decree was passed by the Tribunal condemning to death every one convicted of helping a prisoner to escape!

Delphine cared nothing for this; she was quite prepared to risk her life to save Armand and incidentally the life of Louise as well. Nothing mattered to her but Armand at this moment, and she arrived at La Force next day fully determined to carry out their scheme. At the foot of the stairs she found Louise in tears.

"What is the matter, Louise?"

"Ah, madame," the girl whispered, "come and persuade him! Only you can save his life. I have been imploring him ever since the morning, but he will not hear another word of our plan!"

And, as they reached the door of Armand's cell, she

added in a lower whisper: "He has read the newspaper!"

The jailer had put it in his cell!

At these words Delphine turned pale with horror. She knew her husband's fine sense of honour, and in a flash she realized the day was lost. Half fainting, she made her way into the cell, desperately determined to persuade Armand still to carry out the plan of escape.

"Come with me, Louise; you must help me to convince him."

Louise followed, and then took place a scene so harrowing that only once in her life afterwards was Delphine able to describe it.

It is, alas! only too easy to imagine—that winter afternoon in the cell at La Force where a slim boy, his young face haggard with despair, his lips set resolutely, sat on his prison chair whilst the two girls, beautiful Delphine and pretty, spirited Louise, knelt on the stone floor at his feet, imploring him in agonized undertones to let them save him. Delphine, who had always been able to bend his will to hers, at last grew frantic and broke out into passionate weeping:

"You will not save yourself, Armand! Then your son will be an orphan, for I shall die too!"

"Sacrifice that girl's life to save my own?" Armand asked, as his eyes fell on Louise. "Impossible!"

"But you will not sacrifice it! She will hide and escape with us."

"There is no hiding now in France—no escape from this unhappy country. You are asking Louise to do more than her duty."

"Monsieur, save yourself!" Louise interposed desperately, "it is my affair."

"Then you do not know of the law passed yesterday?" And Armand took up the newspaper and began to read the decree aloud. But Louise interrupted him:

"I know all that, monsieur, but again I beg you, save

yourself! I ask you on my knees! Save yourself—I have staked all my happiness, all my honour on this plan. You promised to make my fortune—you may not be able to keep that promise, but what of that? I want to rescue you for nothing. The 30,000 francs will do for us all; we will hide, we will emigrate, I will work for you! I ask for nothing—only let me save you!"

"We should be caught, and you would die."

"If I consent what does that matter? I will die with you."

But Armand was inflexible, nor could the tears and prayers of Delphine move him. At last the entrance of the jailer put an end to the interview; the time allotted for her visit to the prisoner was ended, and she must leave him. She refused desperately to go, but was finally carried from the cell, followed by Louise almost as heart-broken as herself.

Outside in the street Monsieur de Chaumont Quitry was waiting.

"All is lost," sobbed Delphine; "he will not save himself."

"I knew it," de Quitry answered quietly, paying in these few words his last tribute to his friend's honour.

The next day but one, Armand was moved from La Force to the Conciergerie for his trial. On January 3 he appeared before the Revolutionary Tribunal to answer the charges brought against him of conspiring against the Republic and of having acted as his father's "accomplice." His counsel, Chauveau-Lagarde, who had defended the queen, replied courageously to this accusation:

"What tribunal in the world," he cried, "would dare to condemn a man on such grounds? Is it not contrary to nature that a man should not be the accomplice of his father? . . . I will go further, and say that even if the accused had known of the designs of a guilty father, should a son denounce his father? Where would

be then the greatest of virtues, filial piety? Where would be the morals we are seeking to regenerate?"

But of what avail was an appeal to morals before these men of blood? Of what avail, either, were the remonstrances of the audience who murmured as they looked at the heroic boy: "Poor young man! We thought he would be acquitted!" Sentence of death was passed on him, to be carried out next day on the Place de la Révolution. Armand shrugged his shoulders and made no reply.

Delphine was not at the trial; Armand had feared her presence might unnerve him, but she succeeded, by means of bribery, in obtaining permission to say good-bye to him at the Conciergerie. At nine o'clock that evening she was shown into the large, low room where the prisoners were allowed at times to see their friends. Out of this room—probably the *parloir*[1] of the prison, situated close to the last cell of the queen—several cells opened, whilst one end was shut off by panes of glass behind which the forms of the jailers could be seen. This dismal place was lit only by a single candle placed on a table, at which the husband and wife sat together through that terrible January night. Let us leave Astolphe to tell the strange story of that last meeting.

"My mother went quietly up to my father, kissed him silently, and sat with him there for three hours. During this time not a reproach was made by either—death was there. The too generous feeling that had brought about this catastrophe was now forgiven; neither admitted to regret; the unhappy man had need of all his strength wherewith to crown his sacrifice. Few words passed between the condemned man and his wife; only my name was spoken several times and this name nearly broke their hearts . . . my father begged her to spare him, and my mother spoke of me no more.

"In those heroic times death was an ordeal at which

[1] See "Paris Révolutionnaire," by G. Lenôtre.

the victims staked all their honour in not giving way before the executioners; my poor mother realized that my father, so young, so handsome, so full of soul and wit, and, until now, so happy, had need of all his courage for the morrow, and this last trial of a noble heart became, even in the eyes of a naturally timid woman, his first duty. . . . Midnight drew near, and, feeling she was about to faint, she rose to go. . . . Suddenly a small door, hitherto unperceived, opened and a man came through it holding a dark lantern in his hand. This man, strangely attired, was a prisoner on his way to visit another. He wore a little dressing-gown, or rather a sort of long jacket, edged with swans-down . . . white breeches, stockings, and a large pointed, cotton cap, adorned with an enormous fire-coloured tassel, completed his attire. He came slowly into the room, gliding with short footsteps as the courtiers of Louis XV glided, without lifting their feet, when they crossed the Galerie of Versailles (the Galerie des Glaces).

"When this figure had come quite close to the husband and wife it looked at them for a moment without saying a word and went on its way; then they saw that this old man was rouged.

"This apparition, contemplated in silence by the two young people, surprised them in the midst of their fierce despair, and, without reflecting that the rouge had not been put on to enhance a withered countenance, but that it was, perhaps, intended to prevent a brave man growing pale next day on his way to the scaffold, they broke out together into a terrible shriek of laughter, nervous electricity triumphing for a moment over the anguish of their minds.

"The effort they had made so long to hide their thoughts had worked on the tissue of their brains; they were taken unawares by the sense of the ridiculous—the only emotion for which they were unprepared, and so, in spite of their efforts to remain calm, or rather on account of them, they gave themselves up to uncontrolled laughter which soon turned into frightful hysterics. The warders, whose experiences of the Revolution had enlightened them on the subject of this sardonic laughter, had pity on my mother. . . . These men

came into the room and carried her away during a nervous outbreak that showed itself by renewed fits of laughter, whilst my father remained alone given over to the same convulsions.

"Such was the last interview between the husband and wife, and such the first stories told me in my childhood."

The next afternoon, a bitter winter's day, Armand de Custine sat in his cell writing his last words of farewell to Delphine:

"Four o'clock in the evening.

"I must leave you. I send you my hair in this letter. The citizeness X. [Louise] will give them to you. Show her gratitude from me. It is all over, my poor Delphine. I kiss you for the last time. I cannot see you, and even if I could I would not. The parting would be too hard, and this is not the moment to show feeling. What do I say? to show feeling? How could I help it at the thought of you? There is only one way —to thrust it from me with fierce, but necessary determination. My reputation will be what it should be, and as to life it is a frail thing by its very nature. Regrets are the only emotions that come at moments to disturb my perfect peace. . . . I do not think I have ever purposely done harm to any one. Sometimes I have felt a keen desire to do good—I wish I had done more, but I am not troubled by a great burden of remorse. Why, then, should I grieve? Death is necessary and quite as simple as birth. Your fate grieves me. May it grow brighter! May it even one day be happy. This is my dearest wish. . . . Teach your son to know his father, and with thoughtful care keep him from evil ways. As to misfortune, may a pure and vigorous soul enable him to bear it! Farewell. I cannot construct phrases to tell you of the hopes my heart and my imagination inspire in me, but believe that I do not leave you without the desire to see you again one day. I have forgiven the few who seemed to rejoice at my arrest. Give a reward to the one who hands you this letter. . ."

Outside the winter twilight was falling over the courtyard of the Conciergerie, where one other victim stood by the waiting tumbril—an old colonel whose crime was to have stayed beside the king at the Tuileries on the 10th of August.

The harsh voice of the executioner could be heard calling over the names of the victims.

" Armand Louis Philippe François Custine ! "

A warder entered the cell and tore the pen from the young man's hand.

" It is your turn. Come."

Armand followed silently. His serenity never deserted him ; his boyish face held to the last its look of radiant innocence. Yet who can measure the depth of his anguish as from the scaffold in the Place de la Révolution he looked towards that once happy house which only seven years earlier he had entered as a lover ? Did he think of golden summer days with Delphine and her mother under the trees of the garden, now leafless and deserted, as he went to his death with a smile on his face that bitter winter evening ? We only know that he met his end simply, like the brave and gentle boy he was, holding his head high until he laid it down beneath the blade of the guillotine.

So ended Armand de Custine's dreams of the great " Regeneration."

. . . . .

Delphine, left alone with little Astolphe and the faithful Nanette in the Rue de Bourbon, had now no thought but flight. They must escape from Paris, from this growing " inferno," and join Madame de Sabran in Germany. But how was it to be managed ? As the daughter-in-law and widow of the traitors Custine, she could not hope to avoid the vigilance of the Comité de Sûreté, and the gates of the city were all strictly guarded. In her perplexity she turned to the one friend who was left her, a man named Bertrand who had known her as

a child and had been imprisoned with Armand at the Conciergerie. For some reason he had secured his release, and now that he was free he devoted himself to Delphine. At the risk of his life Bertrand became her accomplice in her plans for escape, and every few days came to dine with her, and discuss the best way of carrying them out. Madame de Custine, they finally decided, must leave Paris alone; the presence of her child might lead to identification—disguised as a seller of lace, she would travel to Belgium, thence to Germany, where Madame de Sabran and Elzéar would receive her. Meanwhile Nanette, who could pass easily as a peasant of the Vosges travelling with her child, was to take Astolphe and make her way with him through Alsace across the frontier to Westphalia, where she would join her mistress and go on with her to Berlin.

This scheme, discussed behind closed doors and in hushed whispers, was to be kept a secret from every one in the house except of course Nanette. The loyalty of the other four servants—the cook and his wife, the maid and the footman—was not to be depended on, and indeed loyalty was too much to expect from servants in those days, when not merely to aid, but to connive at the escape of their employers was to run the risk of being denounced as an aristocrat and sharing the same fate.[1]

Delphine de Custine's maid, like many others, lived in dread of the Tribunal, and when her mistress had several times entrusted her with parcels to be carried to Monsieur Bertrand's—containing, of course, clothes for the intended journey—she became suspicious. What could these mysterious packages contain? At

[1] The power thus placed in the hands of servants was sometimes used with terrible effect; cooks taking "an afternoon out" in defiance of orders during the Reign of Terror, had only to appeal to the Revolutionary Tribunal for sympathy: "The citizeness complained that I went to see the guillotine, and did not return after the second head!" Result: approval for the "patriotic" cook and prison for the mistress. ("Histoire de la Société Française pendant la Révolution," by de Goncourt.)

last, one day, overcome by curiosity, she opened the parcel she was carrying and examined the contents. Instantly she guessed the truth—Madame was going to emigrate, and she would be accused of complicity! In a sudden panic she hurried to the Comité de Sûreté Générale and told them her suspicions. . . . Poor Delphine! She paid heavily for her imprudence.

The fateful evening arrived, and Nanette, concealing Astolphe beneath her voluminous cloak, left the house on her way to the Strasbourg coach. A rope ladder had been carefully left hanging from the drawing-room balcony to give the impression that Delphine had escaped without the knowledge of the servants. Bertrand was waiting at the barrier to speed Delphine on her journey with a false passport he had procured for her. Delphine herself was dressed as a lace-seller, and ready to start, when suddenly she remembered that the drawers of her cabinets and writing-table were filled with incriminating documents. It was so like the feckless Delphine to have forgotten all about them until the last moment before starting on her journey! Sitting down now on the sofa, she began hurriedly to destroy them. There were letters from all kinds of people, from *émigrés*, from suspects, from aristocrats still in Paris, many so anti-revolutionary in tone that she realized, with a thrill of horror, here was evidence enough to provide a whole *journée* for the guillotine! With feverish haste she threw them by handfuls into the fire; yet there were some she could not bring herself to destroy—her mother's, Elzéar's, the Chevalier's—and so, seizing upon an empty cardboard box, she began to thrust them into it.

Suddenly a loud knocking sounded on the outer door. Her heart almost stopped beating. "I have been denounced! They have come to arrest me!" she told herself, sick with horror. Hastily gathering up the remaining piles of letters in her arms, she crushed them all together into the box and pushed it under the sofa

on which she had been sitting, and of which the covering reached the ground. Then, standing up in front of it, she contrived to push the compromising box farther beneath it with her foot at the very moment that the armed members of the Comité de Sûreté came into the room.

They were a sight to strike terror into the heart of the strongest—these brutal men, with their red caps drawn over their ragged hair, in their dirty shirts and carmagnoles—yet " as ridiculous as they were atrocious," says Astolphe. Delphine faced them calmly as they came towards her. Guns and sabres flashed around her golden head ; rough hands seized her ; the false passport was snatched in triumph from her pocket.

" Thou art arrested ! " said the leader of the band, designated as the " president."

Delphine made no reply.

" Thou art arrested because thou hast been denounced as an intending emigrant."

Of what use to deny it since the incriminating passport was already in his hands ?

" It is true," she answered simply, " I wanted to escape."

" We knew it ! "

At that moment, beyond the faces of the revolutionaries, Delphine caught sight of a guilty, trembling figure. It was her maid, overcome with remorse at the consequences of her cowardice.

" I pity you ! " was all Delphine said, as their eyes met.

The girl burst into tears.

" Oh, madame, forgive me ! I was so frightened ! "

" If you had spied on me better," Delphine returned gently, " you would have known that you were in no danger."

Meanwhile the members of the committee were searching the room for further evidence against the prisoner. Cabinet doors were opened, furniture moved

aside, but mercifully no one thought of looking underneath the sofa, and the compromising box of letters remained undiscovered.

Then, the search ended, Delphine was led downstairs and driven away in a cab with three armed men to prison at the Couvent des Carmes.

CHAPTER V

A HORROR OF BLACK DARKNESS

In all the history of the Revolution, that time of horror and bloodshed so appalling that many of us cannot bring ourselves to read of it, the fact that appeals most strongly to the imagination is the amazing contrast of brutality and kindness of heart, of bravery and cowardice, of grovelling vice and of soaring virtue. If the French Revolution had been merely an " inferno " unrelieved by gleams of heavenly light we might well turn away our eyes in sickening loathing at the spectacle. But it was not so. Human nature at this crisis was as sublime as it was infamous. Here and there amidst the mass of debased humanity, mad with the lust of blood, were men and women whose names shine out like stars from the blackness of the night, and the same France that produced the monsters of the Terror produced likewise countless heroic victims, not only the Princesse de Lamballe, Charlotte Corday, Mademoiselle de Sombreuil, and others known to fame, but many humble and forgotten people who showed themselves no less capable of supreme self-sacrifice.

Such a humble heroine of the Terror was Nanette Malriat, the nurse of Astolphe de Custine.

On that fatal evening of February 20 Nanette arrived with Astolphe at the station for the Strasbourg coach. Meanwhile Bertrand was waiting impatiently at the barrier for Delphine, and when she failed to appear he guessed immediately what must have happened, and

hurried to Nanette in order to prevent her starting for Alsace. The three made their way back to the Rue de Bourbon and here the deserted flat told its own tale. The servants had fled—after stealing the plate and linen—and the seals of the Revolutionary Tribunal were set on the doors of all the rooms but one. In this one, the kitchen, Nanette improvised beds for herself and Astolphe and here for eight long months they lived —through the whole Reign of Terror.

" In this devastated dwelling," says Astolphe, " Nanette cared for me as if I had been a *grand seigneur* . . . with maternal fidelity. She had nothing of value in her possession, and when the small sum of money she had borrowed for the journey was exhausted she fed me with the proceeds of her clothes that she sold one by one. . . . Hers was a beautiful soul, a noble heart ! "

As a woman of the people, Nanette might have escaped from Paris, without much difficulty, but as long as Delphine was alive nothing could make her leave her post ; only if the worst happened and her mistress perished at the hands of the Tribunal, she resolved to go back to her own country and take Astolphe with her to be brought up amongst the little peasants of Nidervillers.

To return to Delphine, whom we left at the Couvent des Carmes.

The Carmes was one of the worst of the many horrible prisons of the Revolution. " For one Bastille that had been destroyed, thirty, or even forty, had sprung up." [1] Here were none of the amenities that prevailed at the Luxembourg or even at the Conciergerie, where, as we have seen, the women retained their habitual elegance. At the Carmes few people cared about their appearance ; the men went unshaved, the women wore gowns of shabby cotton which they did not change all day. The cells were dark and damp, with windows half stopped up, to increase the gloom, and the smells were pestilen-

[1] " Histoire du Tribunal Révolutionnaire," by H. Wallon.

tial.[1] On every side were seen the traces of the horrible scenes that had recently taken place there—" the walls of the refectory . . . and the wooden chairs were still stained with the blood and brains of the venerable old priests murdered in September." [2]

What a place for Delphine, brought up amidst the luxury and splendour of her mother's exquisite house in the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré ! But adaptability most often goes with the highest breeding, and she retained her tranquillity through all these vicissitudes. " Physical ills," says Astolphe, " had no power to affect her," and she would never allow her natural fastidiousness to show itself at the unpleasant fare provided by the prison which she shared with people of all classes at a common table.

Fortunately, at the Carmes she found several friends, for here were some of the aristocrats who, like the de Custines, had sympathized with the Revolution—amongst them the Duchesse d'Aiguillon and Madame Charles de Lameth; but the most pathetic figure of all was her mother's friend, the old Duc de Nivernais, who had been torn from his bed in the Rue de Tournon at midnight and driven off to prison. Chaumette, one of the most vindictive members of the Commune, had been sent to inspect the duke's estates in Nivernais, yet, though he was obliged to report on his return that he had found no ancient abuses in existence—probably owing to the letter quoted earlier in this book appealing to the duke for protection against the excesses of his agent—the duke's estates were confiscated, and his golden ducal crown was solemnly brought up to Paris and shattered on the altar of liberty.

Little had Delphine dreamt, during that splendid fête at Saint-Ouen, five years ago, that she and the dear old man who entertained them all with princely hospitality were to meet one day in such a place as this !

It must have been a horrible experience for the

[1] " Mémoires sur les Prisons." [2] ' Memoirs of Mrs. Elliott."

sybaritic duke. He liked everything that was exquisite —art, furniture, manners, conversation, music, food, and dress, all these at the Rue de Tournon had been quite perfect. His palate was so keen that he could distinguish the right from the left wing of a chicken, merely by the taste.[1] What, then, must have been his despair at finding himself in one of the stuffiest and dirtiest cells in the Couvent des Carmes? The smells were by far his worst affliction, but after a while his faithful valet, Liebbe, was allowed to come to the prison and bring him his favourite scents—" rose and lavender water, Neapolitan soap, scented with amber, and jasmin powder for his hair." In return for these attentions, the old man would sometimes persuade, or bribe, his jailer to convey little notes to Liebbe, such as this :

" My good François, I am quite well, and not too uncomfortable in my room ; only I cannot make my bed as well as you do—it is very badly done. What I feel the most is having to go down and fill my jug and bring it up again, for it is very heavy. But in time I shall get accustomed to it."[2]

So the Duc de Nivernais, like the fine old aristocrat that he was, resigned himself peacefully to his fate. Nearly eighty now, and worn with fever, he nevertheless pursued his courtly way between these prison walls. Every morning, at the same hour, he sat down at the rough table in his cell as serenely as he had once sat in his bower of birds at Saint-Ouen, and for seven hours a day occupied himself in translating Latin poetry or composing graceful verses of his own. So in the prisons of Paris these people, trained from infancy to control their feelings and to make themselves agreeable, remained true to their traditions. With them, " misfortune was treated like a tiresome child, only to be

[1] " Mémoires de la Marquise de Créquy."
[2] From " Le Duc de Nivernais," by Lucien Perey.

laughed at—and, in fact, they laughed very heartily at the divinity of Marat, the priesthood of Robespierre, and the *magistrature* of Fouquier, and to all these blood-stained flunkeys (*cette valetaille ensanglantée*) they seemed to say : " You can kill us if you like, but you will never prevent us being amiable." [1] Supreme triumph of the spirit over brute force !

There were many prisoners other than aristocrats at the Couvent des Carmes. In one room shared by fourteen women was an old Englishwoman, deaf and nearly blind, who could never make out why she was here, and kept continually asking her fellow-prisoners the reason. " The executioner," says Astolphe drily, " answered her last question." Quite a character was Madame Loison, another of the fourteen. She and her husband had owned a little marionette-show in the Champs Elysées and had been arrested because they were said to have laughed at Marat, and because their Polichinelle had too aristocratic an air. The Tribunal was right, however, in believing Madame Loison to be an " aristocrat " in her sympathies, for she adored the old régime. She had little cause, poor soul, to be grateful to a Revolution that thus expressed its good-will to the people, and now, finding herself amongst the *grandes dames* who represented to her mind an order of things greatly to be preferred to the present reign of " liberty," she insisted on treating them with all the deference she held to be their due ; she did their rooms for them, begged to be allowed to wait on them, and in speaking to them used terms so ceremonious that at first these unfortunate ladies, unaccustomed now to be treated with respect, thought she was laughing at them, but soon realized the sincerity of her devotion. So, in contrast to the insolent jailers, Madame Loison, with her courtly manners and polished phrases, created quite a feudal atmosphere which at the same time amused and touched the prisoners.

[1] " Mémoires du Comte de Beugnot," vol. i. p. 203.

During the day-time the women associated only with each other, but in the evening all the prisoners were allowed to meet in the garden—that garden that during the September massacres had been a scene of horror where the ill-fated priests, pursued by their murderers, had sought refuge, frantically endeavouring to escape over the walls, but relentlessly tracked down and butchered. Here, beneath the soil in the middle of the garden, lay their bodies, and over them passed the feet of the prisoners who, for all they knew, would one day share the same ghastly fate. Yet no one dwelt on such possibilities; all lived for the moment, and maintained an air of gaiety, even Delphine, who was already beginning to recover from her dreadful experiences. She was lovelier than ever now, hung about with tragedy, in her black dress and veil, and at the Carmes admirers were not wanting. The German Prince de Salm—he whom Boufflers had met long ago on his way to Lorraine ingratiating himself with the people of Provins—had long adored her, and, having been arrested by the Tribunal, succeeded in getting himself imprisoned at the Carmes to be with his divinity. Soon, yet another lover was worshipping at the shrine of the lovely Delphine—General Alexandre de Beauharnais, once a gay man of the world and the best dancer in Paris, but who had become an infuriated republican and ended by incurring the displeasure of the Tribunal.

In the long spring evenings Alexandre de Beauharnais would walk by Delphine's side through the garden, talking of love, and Delphine, fascinated by his personality and thrilled at this new love affair, murmured soft replies. Poor Armand! Was he, then, already forgotten? Probably not, but Delphine was a woman who simply could not exist without some man at her feet. How far are such women to blame—women whose beauty is of the kind that leaves a man no time for thought, but goes immediately to his head like wine? This was the difference between Delphine and her mother. In

Madame de Sabran, as the Chevalier had said, the first thing one saw was not her beauty but her soul, whilst Delphine's rose and white loveliness appealed directly to the senses. To look at her was to love her, not with life-long worship such as her mother had inspired, but with the fitful fire of passion. And, like the child she still was, she loved to watch the flicker of this flame in the eyes of the men who became her slaves. By an irony of fate, a few weeks after her arrival at the Carmes, the general's wife, Joséphine de Beauharnais, was arrested and sent to the same prison. In the memoirs of the period many women claimed to have shared the same room as the future empress, but for a time, at any rate, Delphine was her companion. Was it in that sinister "Chambre des Épées" where we know that Joséphine spent part of her captivity? if so—poor Delphine! For on the walls of this long, low-vaulted room, with its iron-barred window looking out on to the garden, were the gruesome stains of three swords that had been leant against them during the September massacres—hence the name which the room bears to this day.

Joséphine, child of the south, indolent and luxurious, saw with dismay the place where she was to spend six months of her life, and she showed, says Astolphe, "a despondency that made her companions in misfortune blush." Sunk on her pallet bed, she wept continually, and spent long hours telling her fortune by cards in the frantic hope of their promising her deliverance.

It is said that, fifteen years earlier, in her native land of Martinique, an old negress had foretold the future of Joséphine Tascher de la Pagerie. "One day," she had said, "you will be Queen of France!" This prophecy must have mocked the unhappy woman as she sat dealing out the cards in the Chambre des Épées. Nothing at this moment seemed more unlikely. Only to be free again, out of the shadow of the scaffold, seemed happiness enough to hope for. Delphine did everything

she could to keep up her companion's courage, and Joséphine, too good-natured—or too indolent—to resent her husband's admiration for Delphine, soon became attached to her.

Several times after Delphine's imprisonment at the Carmes she was taken back to her flat by twelve members of the Comité de Sûreté who had not been satisfied with their hurried inspection of her rooms on the night of her arrest and hoped still to find incriminating papers.

By marvellous good luck, on each of these occasions they never once thought of looking under the sofa, and though they actually broke the writing-table to pieces and tore up the parquet, the fateful box continued to repose peacefully behind its concealing valence. Delphine, standing by, breathless with fear, could hardly believe her good fortune, and never dared to look in the direction of the sofa, lest she should betray her anxiety.

Her irresponsibility on these occasions was, perhaps, her greatest protection. The pitiless men who made up the Comité would have known how to deal with a woman who showed fear of them, but they could make nothing of Delphine. Instead of trembling at their questions she answered them with a smile, almost mockingly, teasing these rough brutes as a child might tease some savage animal and surprise it into gentleness. We must leave it to Astolphe to describe an extraordinary scene that once took place between them.

" Seated around a table in the middle of the room, they ended their visits by a long and detailed examination of the prisoner. The first time this sort of revolutionary jury was presided over by a little hunchback, a shoemaker by trade and as spiteful as he was ugly. This man had found a shoe in a corner of the room which he declared to be of English leather—a serious accusation ! My mother maintained that the shoe was not of English leather ; the shoemaker insisted that it was.

" ' It is possible,' my mother said at last ; ' you must

know more about it than I do; all that I can say is that I never had anything sent to me from England, so if the shoe is English it is not mine.'

"They try it on—it fits her foot!

"'Who is your shoemaker?' asked the president.

"My mother named him; he was the fashionable shoemaker at the beginning of the Revolution, and worked at that time for all the young women of the Court.

"'A bad patriot!' answered the hunchbacked and jealous president.

"'But such a good shoemaker!' said my mother.

"'We intended putting him in prison,' the president answered venomously, 'but he hid himself—the aristocrat! His bad conscience had warned him. Do you know where he is now?'

"'No,' said my mother, 'and if I did I should not tell you!'

"Her courageous answers, which contrasted so with her timid appearance, the irony of her thoughts . . . her enchanting beauty, the delicacy of her features, her perfect profile, her mourning garments, her youth, her dazzling complexion, the magic of her pale golden hair . . . her passionate, yet melancholy face . . . her courtly manners, whose very ease brought blushes to the faces of these men, embarrassed by their natural or affected roughness, the matchless quality of her silver voice . . . everything about her combined to win the hearts of her judges, cruel though they were."

So by degrees they softened—all but the little hunchback, who, doubtless, could not forgive the favour shown to his rival in the trade. Who could have behaved as Delphine did during this ordeal? Whilst the Comité were discussing the question of her guilt she quietly took up a pencil and proceeded to make a spirited sketch of the tragic scene in which she played the leading part. The little hunchback, his hump gracefully dissembled by the flattering artist, could be seen standing on a chair holding up the shoe of English leather to the gaze of the company. She was just

putting the finishing touches when one of her judges, a master-mason called Gérôme, a furious revolutionary, stretched out his hand and took the paper from her, which he handed to his companions. Delphine held her breath, and then, as smiles broke out on the grim faces round the table, and smiles turned into laughter, it seemed for the moment as if the situation had been saved.

"Look!" cried the judges, thrusting his portrait on the president, "see how you are flattered! The citizeness thinks you handsome—*ma foi!*"

These jeers, and the roars of laughter by which they were accompanied, only made the hunchback angrier than ever, and Delphine felt that she had made a dangerous enemy. The president of the Comité was all-powerful, and a word from him to Fouquier-Tinville would be her death-warrant.

The Revolution was now nearing its crisis. One by one the obstacles to the supremacy of Robespierre had been removed, the Girondins, the so-called moderates, had long since been executed, the monarchy had been abolished, the aristocracy were being rapidly done away with, and finally the death of Danton this April took from Robespierre's path the only strong man capable of opposing his designs. A further momentous decision must now be arrived at—whether God was to be dethroned likewise. For some time religious services had been forbidden, and the devout went stealthily to confession; but the followers of Hébert had not been able to make the position of Atheism secure, and it remained for the little provincial solicitor, Maximilien Robespierre, to arise and take up the cause of the "Supreme Being." In his famous pale blue coat, curled, scented, powdered, with the inevitable bunch of flowers in his hand, he presided at the great Festival and delivered a long discourse on a belief in the Deity, composed by—the Abbé Porquet![1]

[1] "La Révolution," by Louis Madelin, p. 363.

Porquet had progressed far since the old days when Stanislas had given him a year in which to be converted!

The aristocrats hailed this event with joy, as signifying a return to law and order; but, alas! the worst of the Terror was yet to come. Two days after the Festival of the Supreme Being the law of the 22nd of Prairial was passed, giving absolute power to the Revolutionary Tribunal to pass sentence of death without reference to the Assembly. From this moment the guillotine worked with frightful rapidity; the executions, which in the month preceding the 22nd of Prairial (June 10) had averaged about ninety a week, rose to double this number in the weeks following, and at last in Thermidor they reached the appalling total of 342 in nine days.

Paris had become a place of fear and horror. In the silent streets where now no carriages ever passed, men crept by furtively, pulling their hats over their eyes, starting at the sound of their own footsteps. Women, jaundiced with terror, greeted their friends with hardly a nod of recognition. Who knew what one might be reported to have said in a few minutes' conversation, what twisted meaning might be given to the most innocent remark? One feared to laugh lest it should be said one mocked at the existing order of things; one dared not weep lest one should be accused of regretting the old order that had passed away. "Oh! le bon temps que celui de la Terreur!" cries Madame d'Abrantès, recalling this period of her youth.

Only in the prisons some semblance of gaiety survived—here, at least, one was safe from denunciation, and in these nightmare days death seemed almost benignant, a speedy and simple way out of one's perplexities. The men and women still at liberty had acquired none of this tranquillity; to them life was one long-drawn-out suspense, and the sword hanging per-

petually over one's head was harder to bear than that sword when it eventually descended.

No one was safe from denunciation; the "Glaive Vengeur" struck out in all directions and entirely at random, as will be seen by reading through the list of condemnations passed by the Tribunal. These records, published both by Campardon and Wallon, eloquent in their brevity, dispel any lingering belief in the Revolution as a retribution that overtook the oppressors of the people. The small party amongst the aristocrats who had opposed reforms in 1789—Calonne, the Polignacs, and their set, including the Comte d'Artois, perhaps the most really culpable member of the court party—had all emigrated, whilst amongst those who remained in France to perish were some of the most ardent reformers and the truest friends of the people—good old Malesherbes, once the colleague of Turgot in his schemes for relieving distress; Madame Elizabeth, and the Princesse de Lamballe; the Comte de Brienne, to whom "the destitute had never applied without being listened to and helped," and who was executed in spite of the fact that *more than thirty villages petitioned for his release*[1]; Emilie de Sainte-Amaranthe, who at eleven years old had cut off and sold her golden hair to save a starving family,[2] and was led to her death in the *chemise rouge* of an assassin,—these are only a few of the countless instances that could be quoted, and which form no striking exceptions to the general rule. On the contrary, in looking through the list of aristocrats condemned, *I have been unable to discover one who was accused of any wrongs towards the people*—they were condemned merely for being aristocrats, and on no other pretext.

Yet one hears sometimes the extraordinary argument brought forward that these unfortunate people were descended from nobles who had oppressed the people.

[1] "Mémoires de la Duchesse d'Abrantès," vol. i. p. 385.
[2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 218

As a matter of fact, I do not think this charge was brought against a single victim of the Tribunal—nor was such evidence necessary.[1] But, even had it been required and forthcoming, can one conceive a more monstrous injustice than to hold a man responsible for the conduct of his ancestors? The Mosaic law that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children was never a command given to man to carry out, but simply the statement of the natural law of heredity by which a man suffers in himself for the vices of his progenitors. What would be the outcry if such a principle of retribution were carried out in the case of a man of the people who, because his grandfather was a felon, were treated as an outcast and refused the privileges of a law-abiding citizen? Would not the plea of "giving every man his chance in life" be justly brought forward, and the taint of his ancestry be counted as atoned for by his own honourable behaviour?

Had the Revolution broken out sixty or thirty years earlier—under the corrupt régime of the Regent or of the infamous Louis XV—not a voice could have been raised in remonstrance; had the king who lived only for his vile pleasures and cared nothing for the welfare of his people, been torn from the throne; had the Pompadour who organized the Parc aux Cerfs, and not the du Barry who abolished it, been dragged shrieking to the scaffold, had the Conciergerie been filled with the

[1] Such an incident as the condemnation of Charles Darnay in "The Tale of Two Cities" is of course purely imaginary. Dickens, as an artist, legitimately created a dramatic situation, by introducing the pretext of the uncle's ill-treatment of a peasant; but in *no* real instance was evidence of this kind brought forward, nor would it have been listened to at a time when the Tribunal had fifty cases to dispose of in a few hours.

Victims were summoned in batches and condemned without the formality of a trial—without even being allowed to utter a word in their own defence.

"Tu es accusé de propos contre-révolutionnaires."

"Mais, citoyen président——"

"Tu n'as pas la parole! A l'autre!"

And the next prisoner was led before the judges.

routs of the Regency or the scandalous women of Louis XV's youth, then, indeed, the Revolution would have been the retribution represented by democratic writers. But this is precisely what did not happen. Louis le Bien-Aimé died in his bed, and, if no longer loved, yet publicly mourned by the nation[1]; Madame de Pompadour lived in ease and splendour to the end of her days, and not one member of the dissolute Court of the Regent survived to suffer at the hands of "the People."

As to the people themselves, how did they fare in these days of their "sovereignty"? At every turn, ironical placards met the eye: "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité, ou la Mort!" Or outside the theatres, filled now only with the lowest rabble: "De par et pour le Peuple Souverain." Meanwhile the people, poorer than ever through want of employment, were far more dumb than they had ever been under their old oppressors. Woe betide the mother of hungry children who now dared to criticize the existing order of things!

For, though the royal family and aristocracy, who had been held responsible for the famine, were now swept away, provisions were still very scarce; the people were just kept from starving—for the *bête populaire* must be fed if it was not to rise against its rulers; but the black and slimy *pain de section* dealt out in scanty rations, was far from satisfying.

Yet so firm a hold had the demagogues acquired over the minds of the populace that the crowd who had once marched on Versailles breathing curses against the *boulanger* now meekly gathered up the crumbs that fell from their masters' tables. Just outside Paris, says Courtois in the *Moniteur*, the great journal of the day, the leaders of the Tribunal, including the austere Robe-

[1] "A la mort de Louis XV.... Paris tout entier prit le deuil...." ("Au Couchant de la Monarchie," par le Marquis de Ségur). "L'artisan, le portefaix, ceux à qui il ne fait réellement rien qu'un roi soit mort, s'étudiaient à attrister leurs vêtements. Il semblait que chacun eût perdu son père" ("Mémorial de Norvins," vol. i.).

spierre, " had several pleasure-houses where they gave themselves up to the most infamous debauchery. There they always found Lucullus feasts spread, whilst those they spoke of as ' the populace ' [1] (for it was thus that in their orgies they referred to the mob of whom they made use to carry out their criminal designs) were in dire want. . . ." [2]

Madame de la Tour du Pin, too, describes the scenes that took place in Bordeaux at this moment : " When two or three hundred people, each waiting for his pound of meat, were gathered round the butcher's door, the crowd made way without a murmur or dispute for messengers carrying fine appetizing joints destined for the tables of the representatives of the people, whilst most of the crowd could only aspire to scraps. My cook, who was then sometimes obliged to go and fetch provisions for the ruffians, told me in the evening that he could not imagine why he was not assaulted. The same sight was to be seen at the bakers' doors, and even if envious eyes rested on the baskets of little white rolls intended for our masters, not a complaint was heard."

But this was the milder side of the people's sufferings. They had far more to fear from the Tribunal than slow starvation. Let any one who imagines that the Reign of Terror was mainly a massacre of the aristocrats, and that the members of " the People " condemned were merely incidental, examine for himself the list of sentences passed by the Tribunal.

Now the number of death-sentences passed and executed by the Revolutionary Tribunal during the course of its existence—that is to say, between March 10, 1793 and May 1795, is approximately 2,800. Out of all these victims *only about* 485 *were nobles*, and amongst

[1] Note, in this context, Fouquier's last words to the people, shrieked on his way to the guillotine : " Vile canaille ! Va chercher du pain ! "

[2] On the subject of these orgies see also " Deux Amis de la Liberté," vol. xii. p. 194, and " Mémoires sur les Prisons," by Riouffe, vol. ii. p. 248.

these are included all officers of the army or navy who belonged to the nobility. What, then, of the remaining 2,315? Of these, 205 were ecclesiastics—almost entirely obscure and humble priests; but no dissolute pontiffs such as the Cardinal de Rohan. Eliminating, then, the nobility and clergy, we find that 2,110 people of the middle and working classes perished—a total that includes the following items[1]:

360 Government officials—from farmer-generals down to small clerks and turnkeys; also members of the various revolutionary factions condemned by each other.
320 shopkeepers.
253 soldiers and sailors—not officers.
173 people of no profession—mostly women.
161 lawyers and men of business.
130 workmen.
106 domestic servants.
68 cultivators and wine-growers.
64 clerks and secretaries.
48 artists, authors, architects, etc.
39 court officials.
32 doctors and dentists.
31 barbers and hairdressers.
29 manufacturers.
23 working women (*ouvrières*).
22 inn-keepers.
13 printers.
12 artificers.

Besides these are the curious items of a rat-catcher, a poacher, a chimney-sweep, several old-clothes sellers, and pathetic victims such as "Ostalier, bon pauvre et jardinier," or Dorival, a "hermit-weaver," whose power to injure the Republic is quite unimaginable.

[1] I do not know whether any other writer has analysed this list. I have compiled the figures direct from Campardon's "Tribunal Révolutionnaire." In the provinces the proportion of victims taken from "the people" was of course far higher. Arsène Houssaye (in "Notre Dame de Thermidor," p. 146) says that out of 11,470 only 639 were nobles.

Such was " the People's Revolution " ! How far was it the will of " the People " ? Undoubtedly it was the will of that residuum—*la bête populaire* of whom the Tribunal had made their tool, for we are told that it was against the members of their own class that the furies of the guillotine uttered their foulest invectives, whilst at Orange a tribunal presided over by rag-pickers resulted in the condemnation of no less than a hundred of their own profession. But were these the People—the *apaches* and the *tricoteuses*, the viragoes who crowded on the steps of the Palais de Justice howling at unfortunate victims ? Was not the " mass of the true people " far more truly represented by the audiences that applauded the acquittals of the Tribunal, by the innumerable men and women accused of saying they hated the Revolution, and by the inhabitants of the Rue Saint-Honoré, who, sickened at the sight of the tumbrils passing continually beneath their windows to the Place de la Révolution, petitioned for the removal of the guillotine to another quarter of the town ?

It was thus that all the great *fournées* of the Terror, after the passing of the *loi du 22 Prairial*, took place at the Place du Trône, when Fouquier, desperate for pretexts to condemn more victims, invented the " conspiracies of the prisons," and was able by this means to supply fifty or sixty heads daily for the guillotine.

One of the most pathetic of these victims was Boufflers' cousin, the poor little Duchesse de Biron, once Amélie de Boufflers, whose *petit air effarouché* had so amused the gay Chevalier. Timid as she was throughout her life, she went to her death as bravely as the rest, asking only for a little cotton-wool to fill her nostrils so as to keep out the odour of the crowd at the Tribunal lest it should make her faint and appear afraid. Fouquier did not even trouble to invent an accusation against her ; another Duchesse de Biron, the wife of a cousin of her husband's, had been condemned, and the jailer, uncertain which of the two

duchesses he should take, appealed to the Accusateur Public. "Take them both!" Fouquier answered with a shrug. This day was the great *fournée de nobles*, in which also perished the old Maréchal de Mouchy and his wife, Prince Victor de Broglie, and Madame Crozant, who had devoted herself to the care of nursing mothers.

Ten days later came the largest *fournée* of all—no less than sixty people, accused of a conspiracy at the prison of the Luxembourg. What must have been the feelings of the Chevalier de Boufflers, far away at Rheinsberg, when the news of this dreadful *fournée* reached him, for amongst the names—all men but two—was that of "Marie Catherine Stanislas Boufflers, femme de Boisgelin, 50 ans, ex-noble et ex-comtesse." Poor Catherine de Boisgelin! She had not been very "pleasant in her life," but she was certainly guilty of no wrongs towards the people. I think Madame de Sabran must have forgiven her now for all the unhappiness she had caused her—even for that miserable evening, seven years ago, when she had tortured her about the Chevalier's letters. The Tribunal had no charge to bring against her except that of being the wife of the Comte de Boisgelin, with whom she had hardly lived at all, and who was condemned merely because he had refused to sit in the States-General.

In that same terrible *fournée* was found a touching figure, the venerable Abbé de Fénelon, nephew of the great Fénelon, aged eighty, whose kindness had endeared him to the poor of Paris, especially to the little Savoyard chimney-sweeps, whose protector he had been. As he stood at the Tribunal a crowd of his poor little *protégés* made their way into the hall, crying out that he was their father and imploring mercy for him. But never did the cry of the poor or helpless touch the heart of Fouquier-Tinville. The abbé was condemned to death amidst the sobs of all the little Savoyards. He turned towards them gently: "Do not weep, my children," he said; "it is the will of God."

All the way to the scaffold they followed him, whilst the old man exhorted his companions in the tumbril, telling them to turn their thoughts to God. Then at last, standing on the dripping platform and seeing still the tearful faces of the children looking up at him from the crowd, he begged the executioner to untie his hands for a moment so that he might spread them out in blessing over the children's heads. As he did this the whole crowd, touched suddenly by divine power, fell on their knees around the scaffold. The blade descended in a silence only broken by the sound of weeping.

Was Catherine de Boisgelin amongst the abbé's companions in the tumbril? Were her last moments illumined by a light from Heaven? We cannot tell, for of her end we know only that she met death with courage. By a bitter irony of Fate her happy childhood at Lunéville was brought before her mind, for here amongst the victims was a face she must often have seen there—Simon Mique, the architect who had executed all the wonderful schemes of kind old King Stanislas, in those palaces where she once had been "la divine mignonne."

. . . . .

Every day, now, victims were being taken from the Carmes and led to the scaffold. Delphine, convinced that her turn must come, nerved herself to face the summons. For, though on the last visits paid by the Comité to her flat the fatal box of papers had still remained hidden, other compromising papers had been found, amongst these a poem called "Hannibal" that Elzéar had composed when he was fifteen, and that absolutely teemed with sentiments "contrary to the principles of the Revolution." She could not fail to realize that she was now regarded with the greatest suspicion by the Comité, and the terrible Gérôme, who, during the scene when she had sketched the hunchback and his companions, had seemed for a moment to relent,

now never spoke to her without ferocious looks and angry curses. Gérôme, she felt, was no less bitter an enemy than the hunchbacked president; moreover, the daring sketch had been placed amongst the other incriminating documents to be given over to Fouquier-Tinville. When, on June 20, after the last visit to her flat, Delphine held little Astolphe to her heart and bade farewell to the faithful Nanette, she knew all too well that it was probably for the last time.

Often through the hot July nights—for the heat this summer in Paris was tropical—Delphine would lie in her dark cell at the Carmes forcing herself to remain awake, lest if, as sometimes happened, the dread summons came at this time and they woke her from her sleep, she might be taken unawares and fail to show courage.

To be brave! To face death calmly! That was the one ambition left to these heroic people, and which not one amongst them all failed to achieve. "Before the judges, in the tumbril, they keep their dignity and their smiles, the women particularly go to the scaffold with all the ease and serenity they had worn at evening parties. Supreme characteristic of that *savoir faire*, which to this aristocracy had become the one duty and their second nature. . . ." [1] Yet was it merely *savoir faire*? In many cases there is no doubt that religion was the power that sustained them, and this society that had smiled with Voltaire at a creed which in their days of prosperity had ceased to hold much meaning for them, now in their hour of need came back to it and found in it a power that enabled them to face death with tranquillity, believing that "to die was only to shut one's eyes for a moment, in order to open them again to eternal light." [2]

Madame Vigée le Brun, speaking of this amazing courage of the condemned, expresses her conviction

[1] "L'ancien régime," by H. Taine, p. 218
[2] "Mémoires d'un Détenu."

that it made their doom more certain, and points out that the shrieks and sobs of Madame du Barry very nearly succeeded in bringing the crowd to her rescue. Had the aristocrats done likewise and cried for mercy, Madame le Brun believed the Terror would have ended sooner, for, as she remarks: "The imagination of the people is not vivid enough to make them realize unexpressed suffering; it is easier to excite their pity than their admiration."[1]

At the Carmes this serenity was maintained as steadfastly as elsewhere. It was now at six o'clock in the evening, when the prisoners were all in the garden, that the Tribunal usually sent for its victims. The arrival of the band of ruffians in their red caps, carrying swords and muskets, had become a daily occurrence which was not allowed to disturb the hour of recreation. So, if it was a man who was summoned, and he happened to be playing at prisoners' base, he merely said good-bye to his companions and the game went on without him; a woman left the party with as little ceremony. "The same sword," says Astolphe, "was hung over all heads, and the man spared on one occasion did not hope to live more than a day longer than the one who went before him. . . . Time was no more counted in weeks, but in tens of days; the tenth day was called *decadi*, and corresponded to our Sunday because there was no work or guillotining that day. Therefore when the prisoners reached the evening of *nonidi* they were sure of twenty-four more hours of life—that seemed like a century, and they held a fête in the prison."

So the hot summer days went by and the month of Thermidor arrived. On the fourth of that month a terrible *fournée* of forty-four took place; amongst them was the poor old Maréchale de Noailles—she who had posted letters to the Holy Virgin in the pigeon-cot—now eighty-five and more than ever wandering in mind, but devout to the last. Her daughter-in-law and

[1] "Mémoires of Madame Vigée le Brun," vol. ii. p. 113.

granddaughter perished with her. Whilst this brutal crime was taking place the prisoners at the Carme were walking together round the garden in the cool of the evening, for a terrific thunderstorm had burst over Paris and cleared the air.

Blown on the breeze came the sounds of the great city all astir at this hour of the daily spectacle—the distant roar of the crowd in the Place du Trône, the roll of drums, with now and again a burst of savage music—the thrilling melody of the " Marseillaise " or the angry gasp of the " Ça ira ! " Up and down the street the newsvendors were calling out the latest judgments of the Tribunal in tones raised purposely to a stentorian pitch as they passed the prisons : " Voici la liste des gagnants à la loterie de la très-sainte Guillotine ! Qui veut voir la liste ? Il y en a aujourd'hui quarante quatre, plus ou moins ! " Which of their names would be found in that list the following evening ? This was the unspoken thought in the minds of the prisoners as they paced the wet garden-paths of the Couvent des Carmes. The arrival of the emissaries of the Tribunal left them no longer in doubt. Gathered in a piteous group, they stood waiting to respond to the dreaded summons—each one nerving himself to hear the sound of his own name. Delphine listened with a beating heart, and these words smote on her ears with a cold thrill of horror :

" Frédéric Salm-Kirbourg . . . Alexandre Beauharnais. . . ."

At the sound of that last name all Delphine's courage deserted her, and she burst into a passion of tears. Beauharnais himself, pale but resolute, came towards her and slipped an Arab ring into her hand as he whispered farewell.

The Prince de Salm's last thoughts were also for Delphine. At his house opposite her flat in the Rue de Bourbon were certain letters she had written him, and his one dread was that they might be discovered

and incriminate her with the Tribunal. With great difficulty he contrived to let his sister, the Princess of Hohenzollern, know of them, and at the risk of her life she entered his house and destroyed the letters. Then, knowing that this had been done, the prince died calmly.

So on the same day and in the same tumbril both Delphine's lovers went to their death.

. . . . .

In his lair at the Conciergerie—on the first floor of the Tour d'Argent—Fouquier sat at work making out his lists. Bent over his task "like an ox beneath the yoke," he would toil far into the night physically exhausted, yet trusting no one to carry out his dreadful task with his own thoroughness. Things were going well now, "les têtes tombent comme des ardoises!" he had said cheerfully, and the growing pile of names on his writing-table promised well for the total of a hundred heads a day that he hoped to achieve.

These names were all entered on separate sheets of paper, and Fouquier, rising at last from his work to go out to supper, gathered them all carefully together, as was his wont, and piled them into a cardboard box which he put away in a safe place. Next morning, when arranging the programme for the day, he would take off the top of the pile the number of sheets required to make up a substantial *fournée*. This task methodically performed, Fouquier rose, and, with the soothing consciousness of duty done, put on his feathered hat, *à la* Henri IV, and made his way down the narrow staircase of the tower. As he passed before the men he employed to help him in his work his eyes, under their monstrously thick brows, peered out distrustfully, whilst the looks that he encountered were those in which hatred and contempt were only veiled by fear. Every one hated Fouquier, but so far no one dared to show it—the day was coming when they would no longer tremble at his footstep, when the

curses that fell perpetually from his lips would provoke only laughter, and over four hundred witnesses would arise to testify to his countless infamies.

Amongst the men who watched him leave the tower was Gérôme—the furious revolutionary before whom Delphine de Custine had so often trembled. Gérôme was one of the very few people trusted by Fouquier to enter his room, whilst he was away, and now, when the black-coated figure of the Accusateur Public had disappeared, Gérôme as usual made his way into the lair of the monster and glanced around him. He was alone. At this hour of the evening it was unlikely that any one would come into the silent tower—except, perhaps, Robert Wolf, Fouquier's clerk, a silent, impassive man, who, whilst serving Fouquier, thought his own thoughts the while. What those thoughts were Wolf would one day tell to Fouquier's judges ; but that time had not come. Gérôme knew, however, that Wolf was to be trusted not to betray him, and stealthily he set about his nightly task. Crossing the room to the corner where Fouquier had put the fatal cardboard box, he took it from its hiding-place and swiftly turned over the pages it contained until he came to the one he sought—the page on which, in Fouquier's crabbed writing, was the name of " Delphine Custine."

For, just as Delphine had feared, her imprudence that day at her flat when she sketched the members of the Comité had brought on her the vengeance of the hunchbacked president, and the unlucky drawing, together with the other incriminating documents found later in her rooms, had been handed over to the Accusateur Public, with the result that her name had now been for many weeks on Fouquier's list for the guillotine.

Why, then, was she still alive ? Because that very imprudence that had made for her so dangerous an enemy had gained her a devoted friend. Gérôme, bloodthirsty revolutionary though he was, had fallen under the

spell of her beauty. Her daring, that had so enraged the hunchback, fascinated Gérôme. She was so *exquisite*, so unlike anything he had ever seen in his own rough workaday world, and from this moment one idea possessed him. Delphine's golden head must not fall beneath the blade of the guillotine! Other heads did not matter, for Gérôme was a thorough-going revolutionary; he cared nothing for the countless wretched prisoners that filled the Conciergerie, for the tumbril loads he saw daily moving out on to the quay, and as he turned over the pages in Fouquier's cardboard box and carefully placed the one bearing Delphine's name at the bottom of the pile; he cared nothing for that other name that now lay at the top instead of Delphine's. He had done this every evening without once failing ever since he knew that her name had been entered in the fatal register, and Delphine, trembling at his angry looks and the ferocious language he was careful to employ whenever he addressed her, little dreamt that all the while he was risking his life to save her. His plan had been well thought out: to remove the page from the pile would, he knew, lead to discovery, for Fouquier counted over the number of pages every morning; but he did not check their order. Therefore, to keep on moving Delphine's name perpetually to the bottom was to postpone continually the day of her execution. How long would he be able to do this? That was the thought that haunted Gérôme! Another thought haunted him too, at moments, and to-night, as he made his way back to his own room, it kept him wakeful through the watches of the night. What if some one else had devised the same plan and were trying to save another victim at the expense of Delphine de Custine? This possibility so tormented him that several times he had crept back at dead of night to Fouquier's lair to make sure that no one had disturbed the order of the pages. To-night, again, the same fear assailed him, and in the small

hours of the morning—for Fouquier came back after supper and often worked far into the night—he stole up the winding staircase to the rooms of the Accusateur Public. All was well; no light came from the room in the Tour d'Argent; Fouquier was asleep in his bedroom close by in the Tour de César. Gérôme entered stealthily and made his way to the place where lay the cardboard box. As he took it out a cold thrill went through him, for there, on the very top, the first name of all, was Delphine's. Gérôme shuddered. Had he not obeyed his premonition that fair head must have fallen the next day. Once more thrusting the paper to the bottom of the pile, he went back to his room sick with fear. Whose was the hand that had placed Delphine at the top? Was it Fouquier's own? Had he resolved on her death? If so, nothing could save her; moreover, Gérôme's ruse would now be discovered, and he himself would probably perish likewise. But mercifully, in the morning Fouquier appeared to have noticed nothing, and Delphine's name still lay beneath the rest.

As the days of Thermidor went by, the contents of the cardboard box dwindled ominously. The *fournées* of the last few days had been so enormous that the prisons were rapidly emptying, and Fouquier was hard put to it to make up his lists. At last, one evening—about three nights after the death of the Prince de Salm and General de Beauharnais, Gérôme, going to the box, found only two pages besides Delphine's! It was beyond his power to save her now, and Gérôme was filled with despair.

Meanwhile, Delphine at the Carmes daily awaited her summons before the Tribunal. The prisoners, no longer allowed to walk in the garden, knew that some terrible crisis was impending. During the last week or two the jailers had been changed for men far harsher than their predecessors, and in response to inquiries about this change of treatment these men brutally

replied that the Tribunal had decided not to judge any more victims, but *to repeat the massacres in the prisons*.

It was true ; Robespierre and Fouquier realized that the people were tired of the guillotine—" le peuple est las de la guillotine "—and, as a show, it had ceased to attract. Some other way must be found of removing the remaining obstacles in Robespierre's path to absolute power—hired assassins must take up the work of the guillotine. What words can describe the feelings of the prisoners finding themselves confronted with this new horror? Even Delphine, who had nerved herself to face the scaffold calmly, felt her courage fail her now. She almost envied the prisoners, who at this moment were summoned to appear before the Tribunal. On the evening of July 26, the emissaries came as usual to fetch the victims, and this time it was Madame Loison, the aristocratic owner of marionettes, who was taken with her husband to the Conciergerie. Her courtly manners never deserted her, and she came with all her customary formalities, her pretty speeches, and respectful curtseys to take leave of the poor ladies she had waited on with so much devotion. It was not only the aristocrats by birth who went to the scaffold with dignity.

The next morning dawned sultry and oppressive ; by midday the city had become a furnace under a sky of bronze. The unhappy women at the Carmes sat suffocating in their cells, filled with a dreadful sense of foreboding. From the garden outside their windows came the dull thud of spades. " They are digging your graves ! " said the jailer grimly.

Poor Delphine ! Poor Joséphine ! In that ghastly Chambre des Épées, with the traces of the last massacre ever before their eyes—the mark of those dripping swords, soon perhaps to be plunged in their own breasts ! How did they retain their sanity all through those frightful hours ?

As night drew on, a sound of tumult arose in the city—the roll of drums, the surging of excited crowds, and through it all the undercurrent of thunder that ended with a fearful storm at midnight. Suddenly there rang out the shrill knell of the little tocsin at the Hôtel de Ville, and at this sound the prisoners gave themselves up for lost. At the same time, in the corridors outside their cells an unwonted stir arose; warders, policemen, *concierges*, hurried in all directions, whilst armed men took their places. The prisoners, convinced that this was the signal for the massacre to begin, were paralysed with terror. The men were for resistance, and set to work on barricades of chairs; the women only wept and shuddered hopelessly, clinging to each other, frantic, demented.

Day dawned at last, a day refreshed by the storm, and with it came a faint lull in the tumult—a lull broken at intervals by the roar of cannons. What could be happening? The prisoners waited, racked with suspense, and at last, unable to bear it any longer, some of them ventured out into the corridor. Others followed—to their surprise the jailers offered no resistance. Soon nearly all were collected there, vainly endeavouring to read their fate in the faces of their guardians. Gradually a faint flicker of hope crept into their hearts, for on those ferocious features was a slight relaxing; the brutality of the men's manner had diminished. What can have happened?

Suddenly one of the prisoners whose cell looks out into the streets bethinks him of his wife who lives near by and often shows herself to him at a garret window. In a moment he has sprung on to a chair and is eagerly peering out of the bars of his cell in the hope of seeing her as usual.

"Is she there?" cry his companions breathlessly, gathering round him.

"She is there! She claps her hands, she waves a handkerchief—now she has taken the handkerchief and

is writing on it with a piece of charcoal in great black letters——"

"What is she writing? For the love of Heaven tell us quickly!"

"First a large R, then O—B—E—S—P— and that is all! Robespierre! My God! it is Robespierre! Now she waves the handkerchief again and with the back of her hand she smites her throat—and laughs with joy! Robespierre guillotined! Kiss me, my brothers; kiss me, my sisters! The tyrant has fallen! We are saved!"

With one accord they fall on each other's necks; they sob, they weep, they laugh, in a delirium of delight. Was there ever such a moment, such an awakening from the most horrible of nightmares? Robespierre had fallen, and the Terror was at an end!

. . . . .

That great day, the 9th of Thermidor, had saved Delphine and several of her friends at the Carmes—Joséphine de Beauharnais, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, Madame Charles de Lameth, and the Duc de Nivernais. Alas! it had come too late to save the Loisons! The *fournée* of the 9th of Thermidor was composed almost entirely of obscure and humble people, and the poor little owners of the aristocratic Polichinelle were taken to their death with the rest. For a moment there had seemed a hope of saving their lives; the people, sickened to fury at this last sacrifice to the cause of "liberty," made an effort to stop the tumbrils containing the victims; but Henriot, Robespierre's ally, broke in on them and cut down the crowd, dispersing it in all directions. After that the tumbrils moved on again, and forty-two more heads fell in the Place du Trône.

But, if the people were sick of the massacre of innocent victims, they opposed no obstacle to the *fournée* of the following day; on the contrary, the Rue Saint-Honoré, that had protested against the passage of the

tumbrils, now hailed the procession of the 10th of Thermidor when Robespierre and his accomplices were driven down the "Via Dolorosa"—along which they had sent so many helpless creatures to their death, on their way to the guillotine that had been set up in the Place de la Révolution again for the great occasion.

Paris danced with joy at the downfall of the man under whose vast shadow it had lived through fourteen dreadful months. Workmen whistled once more as they went to work, girls flew to the pianos they had feared to touch lest they should be overheard and denounced for merriment,[1] the national sense of humour revived, and a caricature was circulated representing Samson, the executioner, reduced to guillotining himself for want of further victims. "People embraced each other in all the streets and at all the theatres; their surprise at finding each other still alive redoubled and sent them nearly mad with the joy of this resurrection, and yet tears flowed abundantly at the remembrance of those they had lost. . . . Human nature, that had been so horribly deformed, now seemed purified, ennobled; the evil spirits had passed away, the angels had taken their places."[2]

Such was the result of the fall of Robespierre!

Yet even now there are men who would palliate Robespierre's crimes, and would have us believe that in his atrocious nature lay some element of greatness. No one was ever more *mesquin* than Robespierre; the pettiness of wounded vanity, furious envy of men greater than himself—these were his dominant characteristics and the motives that inspired his policy, as contemporary evidence testifies. "Type vivant de l'envie," says Lacretelle, who describes the Assembly "yawning at his cold atrocities." "Robespierre," says

[1] During the Terror, at Arras, two girls of sixteen and seventeen were executed for playing the piano on the evening of a reverse suffered by the armies of the Republic. ("Mémoires de la Duchesse d'Abrantès," vol. ii. p. 174.)

[2] "Dix années d'épreuves pendant la Révolution" by Lacretelle.

Garat, who once had been his *intime*, " n'était pas un ambitieux tyran ; c'était un monstre."

Astolphe de Custine, who through his childhood listened to the stories told by the survivors of the Terror, describes him no less forcibly :

" It has been said that Robespierre was not ferocious by temperament : what matter ? Robespierre is envy made all-powerful. That envy, nurtured by the well-merited humiliations this man had endured under the old world, had led him to conceive a vengeance so atrocious that the vileness of his soul and the hardness of his heart fail to make us understand how he was capable of carrying it out. To submit a nation to mathematical propositions, to apply algebra to political passions, to write with blood, to calculate in heads—this was what France allowed Robespierre to do. She does even worse to-day : she listens to men of superior intelligence who pride themselves in justifying such a man ! He did not steal . . . but the tiger does not always steal to eat."

The words that follow were written in 1843, but they are still true, not only of France, but of England to-day :

" The men of to-day, in their judgments dictated by false emotion, annihilate with their impartiality both good and evil ; in order to settle things on earth, they abolish at one blow Heaven and Hell. They have reached such a point that our generation recognizes only one crime—that of indignation against crime. . . ."

But, in order to find out the truth about the men who ruled France in those days of horror, one must go to the revolutionaries themselves or to their apologists ; for, since they all ended by turning on each other, they showed up their former accomplices far more thoroughly than any royalist could do. Thus, Camille Desmoulins will tell us of the treachery and hypocrisy of Saint-Just[1] ; Saint-Just exposes the folly, the futility, and

[1] " Saint-Just," by E. Fleury, vol. ii. p. 187.

vanity of Desmoulins [1]; Robespierre denounces "the falseness of Danton," [2] whilst Danton craves to "eat the entrails" of Robespierre,[3] and, finding himself overtaken by the fate to which he had condemned so many victims, tersely sums up the truth about them all—Girondins, Hébertistes, Dantonistes, and Robespierristes alike—in the words: "Ce sont tous mes frères Caïn!" [4]

What need to have recourse to the testimony of anti-revolutionists when the whole infamous gang have so completely damned each other?

[1] "Histoire de Saint-Just," by E. Hamel, p. 434.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 432.
[3] "La Révolution," by Louis Madelin, p. 353
[4] "Mémoires de Riouffe," p. 66.

CHAPTER VI

THE GREAT CALM

DIRECTLY after the 9th of Thermidor the prisons began to empty. Joséphine de Beauharnais, hysterical with joy at her release, left the Carmes five days later; the Duchesse d'Aiguillon and Madame de Lameth were set free at the same time.

On the 20th of Thermidor the old Duc de Nivernais was also set at liberty. He owed his escape from the guillotine to no flickering sense of justice on the part of the Tribunal, but to the fact that, like Delphine, he had found a friend amongst the assistants of the Accusateur Public. Though no accusation could be brought against him, his name had been duly entered on Fouquier's register, but was torn out by an unknown hand! Was it Robert Wolf's? The duke never found out, nor has it been discovered to this day.

On the day of the duke's release the faithful Liebbe arrived at the prison to escort him back to the Rue de Tournon, and, after bidding farewell to Delphine, who had not yet been set at liberty, the old man started off on foot, carrying his beloved manuscripts under his arm, whilst Liebbe held the parcel containing his few poor clothes.

Pathetic shadows of a bygone age, these liberated victims passing out from all the prisons of Paris in their shabby garments, through the deserted streets back to the scenes of their former splendour! In the Faubourg-Saint-Germain one seemed to be in a city of the dead; the grass was growing between the paving-stones, the great houses were falling into disrepair.

Poor folk, looking out from their doorways, watched with wondering eyes these *grandes dames* and *grands seigneurs* whom they had once seen flashing past in their gilded coaches now moving, ghost-like, back to the world of the living.

The old duke had always been loved by his poorer neighbours, and several of these came out of their shop-doors to welcome him.

"Bonjour——" they cried, then checked themselves hurriedly, for the forbidden words "Monsieur le duc" had all but escaped them.

The old man understood and smiled.

"Call me Citoyen Mancini, my friends! I swear that you will not offend me!"

And with feeble steps he entered the crumbling gateway of his great hotel.

This is not the place to tell the end of the old duke's history; it has been done in detail in the charming book of Madame Lucien Perey, from which this account of his release is taken. Suffice it to say that he lived on several years longer in his desolate home, from which nearly all his treasures had been removed, very poor and shattered, but always kindly and contented. When, in 1796, the Republic celebrated the "Fête de la Vieillesse," the Duc de Nivernais was unanimously elected as "the most virtuous old man of the district (le vieillard le plus vertueux de son arrondissement)." His pillaged house was wreathed in garlands, "the prettiest citizenesses brought him bouquets of flowers, and the duke did not lose the opportunity to kiss their fresh cheeks . . . the procession retired crying: 'Vive Mancini Nivernais!'" The newspapers, describing the fête that took place that evening at the opera in honour of the *vieillards vertueux*, observed: "Amongst the objects of public veneration was seen the heretofore Duke of Nivernais, remarkable for his dignity and the majesty of his features; he greeted the assembly in that old-world manner and with that exquisite courtesy

of which he has preserved the memory. . . ." So, crowned with flowers, amidst the acclamations of the Republic that only by an oversight had omitted to cut off his head, we leave the duke to his well-earned repose. The Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran never saw their old friend again ; he died in 1797, before their return, very peacefully, and rhyming to the last.

Long after her friends' deliverance Delphine de Custine lingered on at the Carmes, and this was the period of her imprisonment that she found the most unendurable. " Boredom," says Lacretelle, who lived through that time in Paris, " devoured those who survived the great atrocities of the Terror. One had no more need of one's heroism to face the scaffold, and the imagination, no longer stimulated, relapsed into gloomy languor." This was still more the case with Delphine, left almost alone in the prison. News from the outside world sometimes reached her now through Nanette, who was allowed to visit her and talk to her of Astolphe, but the *cabinet noir* made communication with the *émigrés* almost impossible. All through the Terror Madame de Sabran was unable to write to her, but once she succeeded in sending her a little poem she had composed which, in the form of an allegory, told Delphine of the emotions her mother was passing through during those dreadful months of anxiety :

" Est bien à moi, car l'ai fait naître,
Ce beau rosier, plaisirs trop courts !
Il a fallu fuir, et peut-être
Plus ne le verrai de mes jours.

" Beau rosier, céde à la tempête :
Faiblesse désarme fureurs,
Sous les autans, courbe ta tête,
Ou bien c'en est fait de tes fleurs.

" Bien que me fis, mal que me causes,
En ton penser s'offrent à moi ;
Auprès de toi n'ai vu que roses,
Ne sens qu'épines loin de toi.

" Etais ma joie, étais ma gloire,
Et mes plaisirs et mon bonheur ;
Ne périras dans ma mémoire :
Ta racine tient à mon cœur ! ! . . .

" Rosier, prends soin de ton feuillage,
Sois toujours beau, sois toujours vert,
Afin que voye après l'orage
Tes fleurs égayer mon hiver."

One night in October, Delphine was aroused from her sleep at three o'clock by a loud knocking on her door. She started up in alarm—what new terror was this ? Rough voices were calling to her, voices she recognized with fear as those of drunken men.

" Who is it ? What do you want ? " she called out tremblingly.

" We are friends, citizeness. Open the door ! "

" I will not open it. I do not know who you are ! "

" But, citizeness, we are here to liberate you ! "

" That may be ! "

" It is true ! Open the door and come with us ! "

Go with them ? With drunken men she did not know, in the middle of the night ? Impossible ! No prayers or explanations would move her. " Then we will come back in the morning to fetch you." And, amidst much laughter, they retired.

Next day, at ten o'clock, three perfectly sober young men arrived, and now Delphine realized that they were friends indeed. This was the strange story they told her :

Late the night before they had all come into the office of Legendre, the retired butcher, where they were employed, after drinking at a cabaret. It was the business of Legendre to receive the petitions addressed to the Republic by friends of prisoners, and stacks of these lay piled on a shelf in the corner, for Legendre seldom bothered to read them. The three boon companions, heated by wine, began to play the fool—jumping on the tables, pushing each other about, and

upsetting the furniture. In the confusion a paper fell from the shelf, which was picked up immediately by one of the revellers, whose name was Rossigneux.

"What have you there?" cried the others.

"A petition, no doubt!" answered Rossigneux.

"Yes, but what is the name of the prisoner?"

It was too dark to read it; they called for a light. Then, whilst waiting for it to be brought, they all made an oath to rescue the prisoner mentioned in this petition, whoever he might be.

A candle was placed on the table, and the three heads bent over the paper.

"What luck!" cried the three young men, "it is *la belle* Custine! A second Madame Roland! We will all go together and get her out of prison!"

Legendre himself came in a moment later, drunk as the rest, and appended a crazy signature to the order for release made out by the roysterers. Thus it was that they arrived at Delphine's door in the small hours of the morning.

On such slight threads hung the fate of men and women during those strange days!

Whose was the petition that by this extraordinary coincidence had given Delphine her liberty? None other than the faithful Nanette's! Nanette had moved Heaven and earth to secure her mistress's release. She set about it cleverly too. The de Custines' china factory at Nidervillers had been shut down by the revolutionaries, and fifty of the workmen, amongst whom was Malriat, Nanette's father, had come to Paris to work at a factory in the Boulevard du Temple. All these men were passionately loyal to the de Custines and eagerly signed a petition framed by Nanette, which she sent to Legendre.

So Delphine returned at last to the desolate flat where still the seals were set on the doors of the rooms, and poor little Astolphe, deaf, and almost imbecile after a long illness, was still lodged in the kitchen.

It was now for the first time that Delphine heard about Gérôme, how he had risked his life to save her, and that, not content with this, he had been to the Rue de Bourbon to look after Astolphe and Nanette. But the fall of Robespierre had brought about the disgrace of all his associates—amongst these Gérôme, who was obliged to fly from the fury of the populace and was still in hiding.

At this moment Delphine's health at last gave way; the awful strain of the past year began to show itself, and for five months after her release she never left her bed. All this time Nanette nursed her devotedly. When she was well again, and Astolphe, too, had recovered, they were able to leave Paris and go to a small estate of the de Custines that had not been confiscated with the rest of their property.

It was then that Nanette said one day to her mistress :

" What does Madame think that she has lived on since she left prison ? "

The feckless Delphine had no idea—Nanette had paid the bills and Delphine had never inquired where the money came from.

" I don't know, Nanette," she answered vaguely. " Did you sell some of the silver ? "

" There was none left to sell ! " It had all gone with the decamping servants the night that Delphine was taken to prison.

" Linen or jewels then ? " asked Delphine, who had either forgotten or never realized the loss of her property.

" None of those left either ! " Nanette replied.

" Well then, with what, Nanette ? "

" With the money that Gérôme sent from his hiding-place every week, with strict orders to say nothing to Madame; but now that she can pay him back I tell her what happened. Here is the account—I kept it carefully."

So in this man and woman of the people Delphine had found devoted friends. Fortunately, she was able to repay Gérôme with more than money, for soon after this his life was again in danger, and now it was the turn of Delphine to save him, for she succeeded in hiding him, and then helped him to get safely away to America.

It was not for a year after her release that Delphine could rejoin her mother. They had arranged to meet in Switzerland. Madame de Sabran and Elzéar came to Zurich, and there—at the Hôtel de l'Épée—they fell into each other's arms at last with tears of joy. What must have been the feelings of Madame de Sabran at seeing the lovely Delphine alive and lovelier than ever? It was a relief almost too great to bear. Yet over their rejoicings fell a shadow—the thought of Armand, torn from them so cruelly. But of this they could hardly bring themselves to speak. "My mother," says Astolphe, "never liked to talk of this part of her life —so glorious but so painful—it would have been almost like beginning it over again."

Delphine only remained a few weeks in Switzerland and then returned to Nidervillers, whilst Madame de Sabran rejoined Boufflers.

Prince Henry of Prussia had given them a little farm on his estates called Merkatz, and here they spent two years, but by the end of that time evil tongues had succeeded in creating misunderstandings between Boufflers and the prince. Boufflers was far too whimsical and independent to find the position of a *protégé* a congenial one for long, and detecting a coldness in the Prince's manner he decided to leave Merkatz and accept the King of Prussia's offer of an estate in Poland called Wimislov, where he hoped to start a colony for *émigrés*.

Just at this time Madame de Sabran heard of the confiscation of her property; the lovely house in the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré had been annexed by the

Republic, and she herself had been declared an *émigrée* for the second time. There was, therefore, now no longer any disparity between the positions of Madame de Sabran and the Chevalier, and so at last, after all these long years of waiting, Boufflers suggested that they should be married at once. He started for Wimislov to prepare for her arrival, and from Breslau on his way there he wrote her this strange proposal :

" Come quickly, then, little lazy one, so that I may marry you, for this ought to have been done long ago. You cannot imagine, *chère fille* ; or rather, I hope you feel for yourself, instead of imagining, how I am looking forward to it. I see ourselves already doing together something serious for the first time in our lives. You will be embarrassed without being awkward, whilst I will content myself to be awkward without being embarrassed ; anyhow, we will get through it as well as so many others who have not died of it. What I am most troubled about is my wedding coat, for my wardrobe has not yet arrived on account of the floods which make it impossible to ascend the river, but I hope that from now onwards things will arrange themselves, and if the wife arrives before the wardrobe I shall not complain.

" You are the admiration of every one here ; they cannot conceive how a woman that they conclude to be accustomed to all the delicacies and elegance of France should boldly make up her mind to come and lie on a heap of straw with an old Job in the depths of Poland. . . .

" Do you know that I am really annoyed with you, I have no letter from you, and I am going to be away for eight or ten days, during which, if you write to me, your letters will have to wait, and I assure you that, however you may talk and laugh about it, this is very annoying for an 'intended.' " [1]

(Mais viens donc vite que je t'épouse, petite paresseuse, car cela devrait déjà être fait depuis longtemps. Tu n'imagines pas, chère fille, ou plutôt, j'espère que tu sens par toi-même au lieu d'imaginer, la fête que je

[1] Unpublished letter lent by M. Gaston Maugras.

m'en fais. Je nous vois d'ici tous les deux faisant ensemble quelque chose de sérieux pour la première fois de notre vie. Tu seras embarrassée sans être gauche, moi, je me contenterai d'être gauche sans être embarrassé ; mais enfin, nous nous en tirerons aussi bien que tant d'autres qui n'en sont pas morts. Ce dont je suis le plus en peine, c'est mon habit de noce parce que ma commode n'est point encore arrivée à cause des grandes eaux qui rendaient le fleuve trop difficile à remonter, mais d'ici là j'espère que les choses s'arrangeront, et en tout cas si la femme arrive avant la commode, je ne m'en plaindrai point.

" Tu fais ici l'admiration générale, on ne conçoit pas qu'une femme qu'on suppose habituée, nécessitée même à toutes les délicatesses et à toutes les élégances françaises, se détermine audacieusement à venir se coucher avec un vieux Job sur un tas de paille au fonds de la Pologne. . . .

" Sais-tu que je suis vraiment fâché contre toi, je n'ai point de lettre, et je vais être huit ou dix jours absent, pendant lesquels il faudra, si tu m'as écrit, que tes lettres m'attendent, et je t'assure, quoique tu en puisses dire et rire que cela est fort ennuyeux pour un *promis*."

Petite paresseuse ! She, who for nearly twenty years had asked no more of life than to marry him, who had entreated him to put an end to the false position and make her his wife before the world ! Did she laugh or cry as she read these words ? Probably both, but she had learnt to take the Chevalier as she found him, and that he should be her husband at last was really all that mattered.

Neither age nor misfortunes nor disillusionments could ever make Boufflers serious : " J'attends pour être grave que je sois mort ! " he said. The letters he wrote her on his way to Wimislov still give forth gleams of that deep-seated sense of humour that had survived all the vicissitudes through which he had passed, and his pen still rhymed of itself from long habit :

" Tu te plains de moi, je me plains de toi ; nous

voilà donc quitte à quitte ; quand je pourrai je reprendrai bien vite entre tes draps entre tes bras mon gîte ; et l'Amour qu' Hymen tiendra par la main ne reprendra plus la fuite."

After telling her of his adventures in German society, which he finds far from exhilarating, Boufflers returns again to the subject of their marriage :

" My plan is to abdicate all authority over my person, and confide it to a little queen I know who will dispose of it according to her pleasure. Farewell, my dear little wife ; if you can read this you will be cleverer than I am, for I do not know which is the worst—the pen, the ink, or the paper. No matter, none of the three will refuse to let you know that I love you and that I kiss you with all my heart."

The Chevalier was delighted with Wimislov on his arrival.

" I am here," he writes, " at the prettiest, or rather, the most beautiful place in the world. The Oder flows at the foot of the garden, and from my room I can see four or five big vessels pass every hour. . . . The views are perfectly arranged, and the scenery as varied as can be expected in a plain. . . . All goes fairly well here, except for the new garden, which but for a few trees gives no sign of life. Geese, turkeys, and pigs will not be wanting ; we shall have ducks as well. If you can lay your hands on any money we must certainly think about a sheep-pen. . . . The house progresses slowly ; just now they are plastering your little room. If things go on at the same rate we may be ready by Pentecost, or, like poor Marlborough, by la Trinité ! "

" What else shall I tell you, dear little wife," he writes again ; " that I love you with all my heart ? That is a topic that would long ago have been exhausted if it had not been inexhaustible ; but one can no more tire of loving you than of living, or of telling it to you than of breathing."

So he had written nearly twenty years ago, so he still wrote and felt, this man who once had made a mock at constancy! All through these long years his love for her had never changed, never passed from romance into mere good friendship. Boufflers became at last her husband, but he never ceased to be her lover.

In June 1797, just twenty years since they first met at the hôtel de Luxembourg, the Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran were married in Breslau by the bishop of that town, the Prince of Hohenlohe. Only Elzéar was with them; none of the gay world amongst whom their brilliant youth was passed were there to smile on them as they came out of the church into the summer sunshine—husband and wife at last! He was fifty-nine, she was forty-eight, but their hearts were young, and they loved each other with all the ardour of youth and the philosophy of age. So in their little house at Wimislov they realized at last the dream that ever since the days of "Aline" had haunted the Chevalier—the life alone with love and Nature—and the last words of the famous story proved prophetic: "Ce n'est qu'à la fin de ma vie que j'ai commencé à vivre!"

The Chevalier and Madame de Boufflers, as we must henceforth call her, lived on for three years at Wimislov, forgetting the splendours of their youth in this belated honeymoon which lasted to the end of their lives.

The colony for *émigrés* unfortunately succeeded no better than Boufflers' other schemes for the good of numanity; the *émigrés* proved exacting and discontented, whilst Boufflers was far too erratic and unbusinesslike to settle things pacifically. So, as time went by, his thoughts turned more and more longingly to his own country. The Revolution was now over, and he began to hope for the ending of his exile. Meanwhile, Delphine in Paris was also longing for her mother's return.

"*Pauvre chère mère*," she wrote, "how good and sweet you are! What a pity you should be buried in the depths of Poland! You alone are cleverer than a thousand other people—you have so much charm, you write like an angel! I hope that in your solitude you are working a little and will write some novels—I would get them printed for you. What a joy to print your works! Madame de Staël writes incessantly, and publishes books; but you are a thousand times cleverer than she is! Write books for me, dear mother!"

During these years France was passing from convulsion to convulsion; the Convention had given way to the Directorate, the Directorate, in its turn, gave way to the Consulate. When in February, 1800, Napoleon became First Consul, Delphine saw her opportunity for enlisting his sympathy with the exiles at Wimislov; she used her influence over a new admirer, General de Beurnonville, and also went to Malmaison, where Joséphine, once her unhappy fellow-prisoner at the Carmes, now reigned supreme over the heart of the future Emperor. At Joséphine's request the name of Madame de Boufflers was removed from the list of *émigrés* who were forbidden to return, and a little later Duroc remarked to Napoleon: "Boufflers' name is on the list of emigrants—you should have it crossed out!" "True," said Napoleon, "he will make us songs!" Strange coincidence! Louis XVI, because Boufflers was a versifier had crossed him out of a list for promotion; Napoleon, for the same reason, erased him from the number of the banished.

The Chevalier lost no time in responding to the summons. "I would rather die of hunger in France than live in Prussia!" he cried, and so, leaving Madame de Boufflers at Wimislov, he flew back to France to settle his affairs and prepare for her return.

At last, in December 1800, after nine years of exile, Madame de Boufflers and Elzéar, in an immense travelling-coach, set forth for Paris. Delphine has described

the wild joy of their arrival. At her little house in the Rue Martel she waited impatiently with the Chevalier and Astolphe. Will the travellers never arrive? Then suddenly there is the jingling of bells, the crack of a whip——

"There they are! They have arrived at last!"

"Look! Their carriage is a house!" cries Delphine, peeping out of the window at the overloaded coach.

"The house of the tortoise!" adds the impatient Chevalier.

"Let us run to kiss them!" says Delphine; "we can scold them at our leisure!"

. . . . .

They were back again at last, back in this Paris that had undergone such amazing vicissitudes since they were young and gay. Over it had passed the Revolution, like a tidal wave, sweeping away so many familiar things, so many people they had known and loved in the happy past, leaving so many pathetic relics amongst the wreckage. In the streets dilapidated coaches passed them, plying for hire, that had once been those of great families destroyed or reduced to penury by the revolutionaries, or in the windows of the second-hand shops they would suddenly recognize pictures, ornaments that belonged to friends they had lost, jewels that had once gleamed on the necks of women who had perished in the Terror.

Paris was a place of ghosts in those days—above all, that part of the city where Madame de Sabran's youth had been spent. The Rue Saint-Honoré! What scenes had taken place here since, as a child, she had wept over the murdered Zina at the Couvent de la Conception! Here was the sinister house that can still be seen to-day where Robespierre had his lair, and there, at Saint-Roch, where the beauty of the young Comtesse de Sabran had drawn crowds of eager spectators as she begged alms for the poor, howling furies had gathered on the steps to see the queen pass to her

death. But, most dreadful of all, was the newly named Place de la Concorde, close to the end of Madame de Sabran's garden, that she had known as the Place Louis XV, but that since those days had, as the Place de la Révolution, been the scene where the great tragedies of the Revolution had taken place—here the king had died, the queen, the heroic Madame Elizabeth, and, to Madame de Boufflers, most poignant thought of all, her " little son-in-law," Armand de Custine. I think it must have been very long before Madame de Boufflers could bring herself to pass that way. Yet, haunting as were the memories that crowded around this corner of Paris, she could not leave it and settle in another quarter of the town. The house where she had lived had now passed into the hands of Delphine's admirer, General de Beurnonville, who had proposed to bring it back into the family by the pleasant process of marrying Delphine; but this offer was refused. The Chevalier and Madame de Boufflers, finding themselves homeless, finally settled down in a small house in the same street—114 Faubourg-Saint-Honoré, which had been vacated by its former owner on account of the damp that exuded from the walls. This they supplemented after a while by a cottage at Saint Germain-en-Laye; but these dwellings, said the Chevalier, were like those of the town rat and the country rat—both holes. For, of course, they were very poor; indeed, they could not have lived at all if the State had not accorded Boufflers a meagre pension enough to provide the necessaries of life—" they did me the honour," he said gracefully, " of believing that I desired no more than that." In an amusing letter to his mother's old friend, Madame Durival, he describes the enjoyment his country " hole " affords him :

" All our domain consists in a fairly large fruit and vegetable garden which promises much in spring, but, according to the sad custom of Nature, contains little

in autumn. But this garden, now blessed, now cursed, feeds its owners, and even gives them drink, for I have a little vineyard and a wine-press and we have the good sense, or perhaps the folly, to think our wine the best for twenty leagues round Paris. At any rate, we find there is no sweeter form of intoxication than getting drunk at our own wine-barrel."

Here in the garden they planted two trees: the oak Stanislas and the lime-tree Eléonore, described by Monsieur de Croze twenty years ago as still existing and protecting by their shade the sisters of the Carmelite convent into which the house (8 Rue Saint-Léger) had been transformed.

The Chevalier and Madame de Boufflers had a few old friends left, and they made many new ones ; amongst these last was Gérôme, Delphine's rescuer, who had just returned from America. Madame de Boufflers could not do enough for the man who had given Delphine back to her, but Gérôme would never join their circle, for he was well aware of his own uncouthness. So when Delphine and her mother pressed him to come and see them often he would answer :

" I will come when you are alone, but when there are people there I will not go to your house. Your friends would look on me as some curious animal, and though you would receive me kindly—for I know your good heart—I should feel awkward, and I do not want that. I was not born like you, I don't talk like you do, I have not had the same education. If I did anything for you, you did as much for me ; so we are quits. The madness of the times brought us together for a moment, and we shall always be able to count on each other ; but we shall never understand each other."

He must, indeed, have been a strange element in their peaceful home, this man who, for all his sublime heroism in the case of Delphine, had nevertheless been the accomplice of Robespierre. Astolphe, brought up as a child to revere him, admits that in Gérôme's aspect

was something that bewildered him—did the boy's eyes read perhaps the mark of Cain upon his brow?

The Chevalier de Boufflers, looking back now on that abyss of horror—the Revolution from which he had once hoped such great things—was filled with a burning disgust:

"No one," he wrote at this time to Madame Durival, "can abhor more than you must do the infernal delirium that has shed so much blood on our soil, and left so many stains upon our nation. . . . Let us look back no more, dear friend, or rather, let us look back further—over these last ten years as across a river of blood in which our imaginations would be defiled. Beyond that frightful chasm, the mind can rest; there is an Elysium where you and I can find my mother whom you loved so much and who so returned your love, and, whilst we regret such charms and qualities as we shall never see again, let us rejoice in the thought that she died a natural death and that her eyes never looked on the horrors which made me blush to be a man."

He goes on to tell this old friend of the shelter he has found from the storms of life:

"This home is happier than if it were more brilliant. I see that in losing my advantages, my goods, and my hopes I have lost only appearances, and that the reality is left me. All our true possessions consist in thoughts and feelings and so in this respect every man has within him a mine, more or less abundant. . . . Nearly all my affections are now concentrated on one to whom you would give your passion for my mother as I have given her name to her. You would find at every moment the same mind, the same tastes, the same wit, the same inward equability with the same outward variety, and those innocent caprices, those unexpected traits, that indefinable charm, and at the same time that incorruptible simplicity that we admired in your old friend to the last day of her life. . . ."[1]

[1] From "La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," by Gaston Maugras

The Chevalier was undoubtedly flattering Madame Durival's old friend by comparing her to the adorable woman he had made his wife, but in the matter of characteristics—particularly of that *incorruptible simplicity*—one can see some resemblance between the two women and a man may be certainly forgiven for idealizing his own mother.

In spite of their poverty the Chevalier and Madame de Boufflers were seen everywhere in the world, and even at the Court of the First Consul at the Tuileries. As royalists, they might have been expected to resent the presence there of the man whom Elzéar angrily described as " a usurping Corsican brigand " in the place of their murdered king, but they were wise enough to see in Napoleon Buonaparte, as Elzéar did not, the only man capable of stamping out the smouldering flames of revolution and giving peace to France. They found their country, that they had left torn by dissensions, deluded by vain dreams of democracy, once more in the iron grip of autocracy and consequently happier than it had been for years. Napoleon was no sentimentalist; he cared nothing for the " Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité " of the revolutionaries, for he believed that to the great mass of humanity discipline is more necessary than liberty; he knew that as long as the human race exists there can never be equality, and that in a world where, for one man who is born to lead, a hundred are born to follow, fraternity is less to be preferred than a fatherly government which never allows the people to dictate. " Do you mean to wait," he cried to the members of the Convention when the mob showed signs of violence on the 13th Vendémiaire, " do you mean to wait until the people give you leave to fire on them ? " And forthwith he swept the Rue Saint-Honoré with his cannons, and at the sacrifice of four hundred lives restored order—nor did the people harbour the least resentment at his action. For the people that always worship force adored Napoleon. So in this strong

man who had taken the place of the weak and kindly king, the Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran rightly saw the saviour of their country.

" I want to talk to you of Buonaparte," Madame de Boufflers wrote to a friend soon after her return to Paris. " I have been to see him, and my heart beat as I looked at him and thought how many destinies rested on him—or rather, the destiny of all France. I arrived the day after the explosion [1] that had been planned to kill him ; every one was still stupefied by it. He escaped from this infernal snare as by a miracle, and at this moment the trial of the monsters implicated in the deplorable affair is being prepared. To give you an idea of the cold courage of the hero—really the greatest of the human race—he had just escaped death by the rampart of a house at the corner of the street where his carriage turned.[2] General Lanne, who was with him, put his head out of the window at the moment of the explosion. ' What are you doing ? ' said Buonaparte. ' But don't you hear,' the other answered, ' that you are being fired at ?' '*Ma foi!*' he said, ' I don't know what they are doing, but they are certainly shooting very badly.' What do you say to this calmness when it was against him the attack was directed ? He has a pleasant and gentle face, talks little to women, or in society, but his manners are kindly, and his wife is the most amiable person in the world . . . they say there was nothing she would not do for people in the past, and that many owe her their lives. I enjoy going often to see them and showing them what I feel at seeing them in the midst of the crowd that surrounds them."[3]

Madame de Boufflers was back once more in the whirl of society—in the new Paris that had replaced the Paris of her youth. Society was as gay now as ever, but with a gaiety of a very different kind to that which had prevailed in the old days of the monarchy. Demo-

[1] A conspiracy to blow up Napoleon with an infernal machine on his way to the Opera.

[2] The Rue Niçaise.

[3] From " La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," by Gaston Maugras.

cracy had already gone out of fashion, and the great aim of the new social stars was to resemble as far as possible the dethroned aristocrats. An awful "gentility" had replaced the old ease of manner, and in the tarnished mirrors of the great *hôtels* magnificent ladies sprung from nowhere minced and preened as they imagined the duchesses of the old régime had done before them. For inevitably the passing of the aristocracy had resulted in the reign of plutocracy. Money now was all that counted, and conversation was a lost art.[1] "Go into any *salon*," said Madame Vigée le Brun, "and you will find the women yawning in a circle, and the men quarrelling in another corner of the room. . . ." Stockjobbing was the great topic of discussion.

Another pleasing fashion that had been introduced since the Revolution was divorce. Under the old régime this practice had been unknown, for the

[1] Madame de Genlis, who also returned at this date to Paris, describes, amongst the new and vulgar fashions that had come in with the new régime, the innovation of going in to dinner in couples—the lady of the greatest importance being taken in first:

"In the old days the suppers of Paris were renowned for their gaiety; we enjoyed ourselves, and talked without interruption because we always chose our places and sat beside the people we liked best. . . . Politeness was always perfect . . . and never degenerated into chilly ceremonial, and in society anything that could resemble etiquette and suggest the idea of differences in rank was carefully avoided. . . The *grand seigneur* who invited the wife of a farmer-general and the wife of a duke to supper treated them with the same consideration and respect. The financier's wife would never have given up her place in the circle to a duchess, or, if she had offered it to her, the duchess would never have accepted it under pain of being thought ill-mannered.

"When we went in to supper the master of the house did not dash towards the most important person and drag her from the end of the room, leading her in triumph past all the other women and placing her with pomp beside him at the table. The other men did not rush forward to give the arm to the ladies, as I have seen done, and as is often done to-day. This custom only prevailed in provincial towns. Women (in the old days) all went out of the drawing-room together, those who were nearest the door passing first; they made each other little compliments, but very briefly, which in no way delayed matters. All this was done without any awkwardness, quietly, and neither hastily nor slowly. The men passed out afterwards. Every one having arrived in the dining-room, they sat down at the table where they liked. . . . Nous avons changé tout cela!"

Church did not recognize the dissolution of a marriage, and the only penalty that could overtake an erring wife was to be shut up in a convent for the rest of her life; but very few husbands availed themselves of this means of retaliation. The passing of the law of divorce on September 20, 1792, introduced, however, a new element of excitement into the marriage tie. Scandal, once the privilege of the great, was now brought within the reach of all, and in the fifteen months that followed the passing of the law no less than 5,994 divorces took place in Paris alone. "It is impossible," says Picquenard, a partisan of the Revolution, writing about this period, "to form an idea of the state of public depravity."

A friend of Madame de Boufflers' writing to her in 1798 gives this illuminating description of the "new society" that flourished under the Directory [1]:

"Every one who has had any education or wealth is in distress, but beneath soiled and shabby garments they retain their polish and an air of dignity—I might even say superiority, for one never loses that. Courtesy, decency, good-breeding, and ease of manner—all these are only to be found in garrets where French politeness and gracious manners have taken refuge, being regarded only as antiquated prejudices to be turned into ridicule by the newcomers who cannot acquire them. That play of wit, that art of saying nothings gracefully, that delicate persiflage that prevailed at the Court, that gentle tone of voice which education gave to women, have been replaced by *bourgeois* screeching, and the use of 'thee' and 'thou.'

"One of the greatest joys is eating. It is the fashion to give lunches. I was at one of these orgies, and will try to tell you what I saw and heard. The guests arrive at twelve o'clock, the deputies (whose wives do the honours of the house) drink a glass of brandy before starting for the Legislative Assembly; every one, men and women alike, drinks the toast of the Republic. Then they begin lunch with tea, which is considered good style, and they end with wine and liqueurs and

[1] This letter is taken from "La Marquise de Custine," by Gaston Maugras.

a hubbub that is unbearable to old-fashioned ears. This lunch lasts about two hours; afterwards, whilst waiting for dinner, they play innocent little games, kissing and slapping each other and tearing each other's clothes—all this amidst such noisy gaiety that the whole neighbourhood knows there is a party at that house. At four o'clock the deputies return for dinner. The table is covered with dishes, as many as it can hold, in the greatest profusion. It is good style to mention the cost of each dish and of every bottle. . . .

"Republican jokes are very free; I can assure you, that is the only freedom that exists in France, and they make good use of it. An extraordinary revolution has taken place amongst women; in the old days, as you know, the women of Paris were accused of being very frivolous and flirtatious, and incapable of deep feeling, and even, to put it plainly, devoid of passion. Well, madame, it is quite the contrary now; the women of the day . . . are no longer flirtatious, but frankly bold [ne sont plus coquettes, mais bien franchement coquines]. A woman finds a man to her taste, and indulges her fancy. One no longer says: 'My lover is amiable, he is good, or clever' . . . the word 'amiable' is heard no longer, and good is synonymous with stupid. Cleverness consists in making money, no matter how. . . . Principles are reduced to prejudices, and nothing is so ridiculed as prejudices—that must be so in a country where there are no laws. . . . Landed proprietors and people of independent means are crushed out of existence, the former by duties, arbitrary taxes, and by their farmers; the latter by the worthlessness of *assignats*. Only personal fortunes, therefore, are left. In order to do good business and inspire confidence, one must have fine furniture, an imposing house, an expensively dressed wife, and, so as to show them all, one must give good dinners, parties, and balls."[1]

[1] In the chapter on the Directory by G. K. Fortescue in "The Cambridge Modern History" we find the state of morality described in still more forcible language: "The men, dishonest, reckless, and vulgar, flaunted their wealth in lavish or debauched display; the women lived in a sort of delirium of shamelessness, exhibiting themselves in costumes more indecent than nudity, changing their husbands at their own caprice, and trading on the charms or the influence of their lovers."

Such was the result of sweeping away the "*corrupt morals of the aristocrats*"!

This was the France to which the Chevalier and Madame de Boufflers had returned after long years of exile. They accepted it with all the philosophy of the age they had adorned. "Madame de Boufflers," says Monsieur Bardoux, "was the last representant, in the eyes of romantic generations, of that bygone sanity of mind [cette justice d'esprit] without dryness or pedantry. Her face retains, through all the accidents of fate, calm, good-humour, and wisdom to the end. . . . In spite of the new society, she remained always the woman of the Louis XVI era."

But now old age was fast approaching, and though Madame de Boufflers' face under her white hair was still as charming as ever, her wit as keen, and her heart as young, the pretty feet that had climbed so nimbly over mountain passes and danced so gaily at Delphine's wedding were crippled with rheumatism. Every year the Chevalier took her to Plombières for a cure, and when there he never left her; sometimes he supported her frail weight on his arm, or, if she was unable to walk, he pushed her about in a wheel-chair. Once she had drawn a laughing picture of their old age when she would have to nurse the Chevalier; but now it was his turn to care for her, and he cared for her like a mother.

We who have read their story must often have felt impatient at the suffering he had caused her—the needless pain at his absences, the wearing anxiety and suspense he had inflicted on her, the haunting fear of his infidelities—but I think that as one sees him in this last scene, the once gay Chevalier now become *le petit père*, wrapping round with tenderness the woman he had loved for more than thirty years, we can forgive him for the past. It is certain that Madame de Boufflers forgave him.

"To-day," she wrote to Elzéar from Plombières in July 1809, "I was able to go up on to the mountains with the kind little father, who half carried me, not on his back but on his arm, for he is very good to me, and the edification of all Plombières. Every one says they have never seen such a good husband."[1]

So we leave him ending his long life:

"Ami sûr, philosophe, et poête, et fermier,
Mari tendre et fidèle et Boufflers tout entier!"[2]

He did not live to see the downfall of the conqueror who had recalled him from exile, for on January 18, 1815, just five months before Waterloo, he breathed his last in the arms of the woman he loved. "What matter to be young or old if only I can be with you and that in dying I can hold your hand!" His wish of long ago had been granted. On his grave at Père-la-Chaise beside that of his friend, the poet Delille, they engraved the words that were almost his last:

"Mes amis, croyez que je dors!"

Madame de Boufflers lived on twelve years longer, not alone, for Elzéar was always with her.

"His arm," says Madame Vigée le Brun, who often saw them together at this time, "was, so to speak, fastened to his mother's, and one could really envy the lot of Monsieur de Sabran, for, in spite of her sufferings and her age, Madame de Boufflers was always kind, always agreeable, and preserved that charm that pleased and attracted every one. I remember once that at the end of her life, Fortense, the celebrated oculist, operated on her for cataract and she was obliged to remain in the dark. One evening, I went to see her; I found her alone without a light. I intended to stay only a moment, but the never-ending charm of her conversation, which was so piquante, so full of anecdotes

[1] From "La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier," by Gaston Maugras.

[2] Lines written to Boufflers by Ducis.

"LE PETIT PÈRE."

that no one else could tell as she could, kept me with her three hours. I thought, as I listened to her, undistracted by any outside objects, that she was reading in herself, if I may so express it, and it was this sort of magic-lantern of things and ideas that she sketched so skilfully which held my attention. I left her with much regret, for never had I found her so charming. . . ."

Her children brought her grief as well as consolation, for Elzéar became a devotee at the shrine of Madame de Staël, thereby incurring the displeasure of the Republic, which resulted in his imprisonment for several months in Vincennes, whilst Delphine fell a victim to a hopeless passion for the poet Chateaubriand and died at last in 1826.

The next year, on February 27, 1827, Madame de Boufflers, worn out with emotions, found that rest for which throughout her stormy life she had so often craved, and now welcomed in the exquisite little epitaph she had composed for herself :

> " A la fin, je suis dans le port
> Qui fut de tout temps mon envie,
> Car j'avais besoin de la mort
> Pour me reposer de la vie."

Yet, was this the end ? Can such love die ? Is it not immortal ? Let those who have loved only that which is material believe that life ends where matter ends—in the grave. But the Chevalier de Boufflers knew better when he put into words the truth that love had taught him : " Aimons la vie et ne craignons pas la mort, car les âmes ne meurent pas et s'aiment toujours ! "

THE END

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

THE HOUSE OF BOUFFLERS

THE de Boufflers were one of the oldest families in the province of Picardy, dating from one Bernard de Morley, chevalier, and Seigneur of the lands of Boufflers situated on the river of Authie, five leagues from Abbeville.

In the sixteenth century the family was divided into three branches, that of the Seigneur de Boufflers, the Seigneur de Boufflers-Rouverel, and the Seigneur de Boufflers-Remiencourt. The ramifications that resulted have caused so much confusion in the minds of historians—scarcely any French writer having failed to confound the various women mentioned vaguely as "Madame de Boufflers" in the Mémoires of the eighteenth century—that the genealogy of the family must here be appended.

ADRIEN I

(Seigneur de Boufflers, Rouverel, Remiencourt, etc.)

(1491–1585)

It will be seen by the foregoing table that there were no less than five women in the eighteenth century known as "Madame de Boufflers"; thus:

1. Madeleine Angélique de Neufville-Villeroi, the Duchesse de Boufflers, referred to in this book as the *Maréchale de Luxembourg*.

2. Her daughter-in-law, the Duchesse de Boufflers, a shadowy personage, mentioned in the Mémoires of Madame du Deffand.

3. Marie de Campet de Saujon (referred to in this book as the *Comtesse de Boufflers*), the "Idole" of Madame du Deffand, often mentioned by Horace Walpole, and described by Boswell in the "Life of Dr. Johnson."

4. The old Marquise de Boufflers-Remiencourt, of whom very little is known.

5. Her daughter-in-law, the *Marquise de Boufflers*, mother of the Chevalier, and the "Mère Oiseau" of Madame du Deffand.

A further confusion arises between the daughter-in-law of the Comtesse de Boufflers, the Comtesse Amélie de Boufflers, and her distant cousin, Amélie de Boufflers, who became the Duchesse de Lauzun. On this point even the "Biographie Michaud" is at fault.

(For the family of the Prince de Beauvau-Craon see next page.)

MARC

Prince de Beauvau-Craon (1679–1754)

m. Anne Marguerite de Ligniville

- **Elizabeth Charlotte**, *b.* 1705; *m.* the Marquis de la Baume-Montrevel
- **Anne Marguerite**, *b.* 1707; *m.* (1) the Prince de Lixin; (2) the Maréchal Duc de *Mirepoix*
- **Gabrielle Françoise**, *b.* 1708; *m.* the Prince *de Chimay*
  - Prince de Chimay
  - Anne Gabrielle, *m.* the Comte de Caraman
  - Prince de Hénin
  - Gabrielle Charlotte, *m.* the Vicomte de *Cambis*.
- **Marie Catherine**, *b.* 1711; *m.* the Marquis de *Boufflers-Remiencourt* (*see genealogy of Boufflers*)
- **Charlotte**, *b.* 1717; *m.* the Marquis de Bassompierre
- **Charles Just**, *b.* 1720; *Prince de Beauvau*; *m.* (1) in 1745, Marie de la Tour d'Auvergne; (2) in 1763, Mme de Clermont d'Amboise (*née* de Rohan Chabot)
- **Ferdinand Jérôme**, *b.* 1723; Chevalier de Beauvau
- **Gabrielle Charlotte**, *b.* 1724; *Abbesse de Saint-Antoine*

The above are the best known amongst the twenty children of the Prince de Beauvau-Craon—the remaining twelve died young or went into convents. The italics indicate personages mentioned in this book.

APPENDIX II

DURATION OF THE "PLATONIC FRIENDSHIP"

In the account given in this chapter (Book II, Chap. IV) of the beginning of Boufflers' *liaison* with Madame de Sabran, it may be objected that I have departed from the line laid down by eminent writers on the subject who have unanimously agreed that the period of "platonic friendship" can only have lasted a short time. That in the eighteenth century two lovers, of whom one was the Chevalier de Boufflers, should have remained platonic in their relations for so long a period as four years, seems certainly too improbable to believe without some convincing proof. This proof, I believe, nevertheless, exists.

Writing on May 2, 1787, Madame de Sabran says to Boufflers: "Avant tout, souviens toi du deux de mai; il sera à jamais mémorable dans mes fastes; c'est lui qui a décidé du bonheur et du malheur de ma vie."

This can surely mean only one thing, that on a 2nd of May Boufflers became her lover. M. Imbert de Saint-Amand arrives at this conclusion in his article on Madame de Sabran: "Un 2 mai (la date seule du mois est certaine; quant à l'année, ce doit être 1779 ou 1780), l'amie se changeait en amante."

But was it 1779 or 1780? Certainly not 1779, since in May of that year Boufflers was in Lorraine, and a letter he writes her from there is actually dated May 2. What, then, of 1780? This might, indeed, be the fateful year but for a further enigmatical remark found in a passage of Madame de Sabran's journal for August 23, 1787: "J'ai plus de peine que jamais à te quitter; c'est bien ridicule après dix ans d'amour, quatre ans de mariage et deux ans d'absence."

Now when these words were written it was exactly ten years since they had first met, in 1777. Hence the ten years of love, for she evidently feels she has loved him from the first. It is

also two years since he left for Senegal; hence the two years of absence. What possible conclusion can, therefore, be drawn from the words " four years of marriage," but that their *liaison* began in 1781, and remained unbroken for four years until he left her to go to Africa in 1785? Her arithmetic being correct on the two first points, it is presumably correct on the third also.

Moreover, if we examine the correspondence carefully we shall find that precisely at this date, the spring of 1781, the tone of her letters alters: " vous " gives way to " tu," " mon frère " to " mon enfant "—a change that takes place in letters XX, XXI, XXIV, and XXV of the " Correspondance," and also after letter IX of the " Lettres du Chevalier "—letters which can almost certainly be attributed to this period. From this time onwards there is no further question of fraternity.

APPENDIX III

CARLYLE AS AN HISTORIAN

WITH regard to certain references in this book to Carlyle's "History of the French Revolution," it has been pointed out to me that Carlyle's inaccuracy is too well known to be worth refuting. Moreover, my attention has been drawn to Mr. C. R. L. Fletcher's edition of Carlyle's book (Methuen: 1902), in which many of the author's errors are corrected by means of footnotes and an excellent preface endorses the statements I had made—quite independently—on the subject of Carlyle's prejudiced and mistaken point of view towards the state of France before the Revolution. "Carlyle," says Mr. Fletcher, "appears to have gone wrong in accepting without inquiry the 'hunger-and-misery' view of the *Ancien Régime*. In giving full scope to his imagination on this point, he has also given credence to several untenable theories, *e.g.* that the clergy were everywhere contemptible and worthless, and that the faith was a dead letter, that the immense majority of the *Noblesse* were utterly worthless and quite indifferent to the sufferings of the lower classes, that there was no enlightened middle class. These views, made the groundwork of his subject, lead him to the conclusion (which, by the way, has no logical connection with these premises) that the whole system of society and government was so utterly bad that nothing short of a complete social upheaval could do any good to France."

But a further point that needs emphasizing is that Carlyle was not merely mistaken, but wilfully misleading in his statements. It is true that he had far less material to draw on than modern writers on the Revolution, but, if his purpose was to write a truthful history, not simply to paint a fanciful picture, he should have felt himself bound in honour (1) to weigh the reliability of the evidence he brought forward, and (2) to quote such evidence fairly. Carlyle did neither. He accepted evi-

dence exactly as it suited his purpose, and, holding apparently the theory that any stick is good enough to beat a dog with, quotes shamelessly any scandal circulated by the gutter press or the underworld of Paris with a view to colouring his picture,[1] and when quoting respectable authorities, such as Lacretelle or Arthur Young, deliberately distorts their meaning by cutting short or omitting part of the paragraph. By this means he has succeeded in influencing enormously the attitude of the British public towards the Revolution, for the men of learning who recognize his errors are but a small minority, whilst the mass of English readers love a lurid picture and do not pause to inquire as to its veracity. For the benefit, therefore, of those who still regard Carlyle as a serious historian I append a few instances of his mis-statements. The most glaring is perhaps the gross calumny on Louis XVI contained in his reference to the *Guerre des Farines* in a paragraph with which he was apparently so pleased that he repeats it no less than three times in the course of his work.

CARLYLE	HISTORY
"And so, on the second day of May 1775, these waste multitudes do here, at Versailles Château, in wide-spread wretchedness, in sallow faces, squalor, winged raggedness, present, as in legible hieroglyphic writing, their Petition of Grievances. The Château gates have to be shut; but the King will appear on the balcony, and speak to them. They have seen the King's face; their Petition of Grievances has been, if not read, looked at. *For answer*, two of them are hanged, on a 'new gallows forty feet high'; and the rest driven back to their dens—for a time."—Vol. I. Book II. chap. ii.	Immediately after his accession, Louis XVI summoned Turgot and Malesherbes to inaugurate measures of reform. Turgot proposed the establishment of free-trade in corn throughout the kingdom. On the appearance of the edict ordering this law to be brought into effect much opposition was excited, and disturbances took place in the agricultural districts. On the 2nd of May the mob, led by the agitators, invaded Versailles to protest against Turgot's scheme for their relief. The King looked on, with tears in his eyes, and promised the people that bread should be sold at the price demanded. The next day the mob moved to Paris, broke into the bakers' shops, plundered large quantities of grain, and threw them
"Starvation has been known among the French Commonalty	

[1] The authority most often quoted by Carlyle is the interesting but entirely unreliable anonymous revolutionary publication, "Histoire de la Révolution française, par Deux Amis de la Liberté."

before this; known and familiar. Did not we see them, in the year 1775, presenting, in sallow faces, in wretchedness and raggedness, their Petition of Grievances; and for answer, getting a brand new gallows forty feet high?"—Vol. I. Book VI. chap. iii.

"History, looking back over this France, through long times, back to Turgot's time for instance, when dumb Drudgery staggered up to its King's Palace, and in wide expanse of sallow faces, squalor and winged raggedness, presented hieroglyphically its Petition of Grievances; and for answer got hanged on a 'new gallows forty feet high,'" etc.—Vol. III. Book VII. chap. vi.

into the streets. It was absolutely necessary to put a stop to the disturbances by force, and much against his will the King was persuaded by Turgot and Malesherbes to take vigorous measures.

Two of the ringleaders *caught pillaging* were therefore hanged on a gibbet forty feet high; but the King, overcome with scruples of conscience, repeatedly said to Turgot, "Have we nothing to reproach ourselves with in the measures we have adopted?"—See Alison's "History of Europe," "Cambridge Modern History," and Droz, Taine, Martin, or any reliable history of France.

Again and again Carlyle repeats accusations against the aristocrats of holding up the corn, yet never once produces a shred of evidence to prove them. It was the theory advanced by the "Deux Amis de la Liberté" and other revolutionaries of this kind, but more reliable authorities show that the real *accapareurs* were the revolutionary leaders themselves, moreover that when they were convicted of the crime, the people themselves took their part and prevented justice being done to them:

Aristocrats and the Famine

Carlyle

"... 1789. Maternity awakes, to hear children weeping for bread. Maternity must forth to the streets, to the herb-markets and Bakers'-queues.... But, instead of Bakers'-queues, why not to Aristocrats' palaces, the root of the matter?"—Book VII. chap. iv.

Madame de la Tour du Pin

"On commençait déjà, avant la fin d'août (1789), à découvrir des menées coupables pour faire naître une disette dans les subsistances, et plusieurs agents furent surpris et arrêtés. Deux d'entre eux furent jugés et condamnés, sur leurs propres aveux, à être pendus. Le jour de l'exécution, le peuple s'assembla sur la place. La marechaussée, insuffisante pour maintenir l'ordre et empêcher que la populace ne délivrat les con-

" Grains do grow, they lie extant there in sheaf or sack; only that regraters and Royalist plotters, to provoke the People into illegality, obstruct the transport of grains."—Vol. II. Book I. chap. viii. etc., *ad infinitum*.

damnés, crut prudent de les faire rentrer dans la prison, et l'exécution fut remise au lendemain. Le peuple brisa la potence et pilla les boulangers, qu'on accusa d'avoir dénoncé ceux qui avaient voulu les séduire."—" Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans," Vol. I. p. 207.

" Ce qui exaspérait surtout le peuple contre la cour, c'était la disette factice organisé dans ce but par les chefs avoués ou cachés de la Révolution. Un banquier, nommé Pinet, homme de confiance du duc d'Orléans, passait pour l'agent secret des accapareurs."—" La Princesse de Lamballe," by M. de Lescure, 1864.

As it has already been pointed out in this book, Arthur Young also held that the revolutionary agitators made capital out of the famine, but if further proof were needed that the aristocrats were not the cause of the trouble, it is to be found in Carlyle's own words. Writing of the state of France in April 1795, after the aristocrats had been swept away, he calmly remarks that " there is yet, after all toils and broils, no Bread, no Constitution " (Book VII. chap. vi.), yet never attempts to reconcile this fact with his former accusations!

Carlyle's Method of quoting Arthur Young

Carlyle	Young
1. " Highbred Seigneurs, with their delicate women and little ones, had to ' fly half-naked,' under cloud of night: glad to escape the flames, and even worse. You meet them at the ' tables-d'hôte ' of inns; making wise reflections or foolish, that ' rank is destroyed '; uncertain whither they shall now wend."—Vol. I. Book VI. chap. iii. Note in Carlyle's book refers reader to Arthur Young as the authority for this paragraph.	" In this inn, la Ville de Lyon, there is at present a gentleman, unfortunately a seigneur, his wife, family, three servants, an infant but a few months old, who escaped from their flaming château half-naked in the night; all their property lost except the land itself; and this family valued and esteemed by the neighbours, with many virtues to command the love of the poor, and no oppressions to provoke their enmity. Such abominable actions must bring the more detestation to the cause from being unnecessary; the

YOUNG—*continued*

kingdom might have been settled in a real system of liberty, without the regeneration of fire and sword, plunder, and bloodshed."—"Travels in France," July 30, 1789.

At the table d'hôte, only three, myself and two noblemen, driven from their estates. . . . One of these gentlemen is a very sensible, well-informed man; he considers all rank, and all the rights annexed to rank, as destroyed in fact in France; and that the leaders of the National Assembly, having no property, or very little, themselves, are determined to attack that also, and attempt an equal division . . . whether it takes place or not, he considers France as absolutely ruined. That, I replied, was going too far, for the destruction of rank did not imply ruin. "I call nothing ruin," he replied, "but a general and confirmed civil war, or dismemberment of the kingdom. In my opinion both are inevitable; not perhaps this year or the next, or the year after that, but whatever government is built on the foundation now laying in France, cannot stand any rude shocks: an unsuccessful or a successful war will equally destroy it." He spoke with great knowledge of historical events, and drew his political conclusions with much acumen. I have met very few such men at tables d'hôte."—"Travels in France," August 1, 1789.

Carlyle, obliged to record that the nobles voluntarily abandoned their privileges, accounts for it by the theory that they were drunk—*i.e.* it was "after dinner." But dinner in the eighteenth century took place at two, or at latest three o'clock, and the next meal was supper at nine or ten! The resolution was passed at the end of the day's sitting:

"A memorable night this Fourth of August: Dignitaries temporal

". . . Soudain, le 4 août, *à* 8 *heures du soir*, au moment où

and spiritual; Peers, Archbishops, Parlement-Presidents, each outdoing the other in patriotic devotedness, come successively to throw their now untenable possessions on the 'altar of the fatherland.' With louder and louder vivats—*for indeed it is 'after dinner,' too*—they abolish tithes, Seignorial Dues, Gabelle, excessive preservation of Game; nay, Privilege, Immunity, Feudalism root and branch: then appoint a 'Te Deum' for it; and so finally disperse about three in the morning, striking the stars with their sublime heads."—Vol. I. Book VI. chap. ii

Émeute des Tuileries

"Victorious Lambesc, in this his second or Tuileries charge, succeeds but in overturning (call it not slashing, for he struck with the flat of his sword) one man, a poor old schoolmaster, most pacifically tottering there; and is driven out by barricade of chairs, by flights of 'bottles and glasses,' by execrations in bass voice and treble."—Vol. I. Book V. chap. iv.

"'Le sanguinaire Lambesc et sa troupe aveuglément féroce' furent singulièrement débonnaire; dix récits en font foi. Quoiqu'ils fussent lapidés par les gens embusqués dans le chantier, ils se contentaient d'avancer sans charger. . . . Du côté des Tuileries, c'était les chaises du jardin qu'on jetait aux dragons: ils voulurent refouler les assaillants et, paraît-il, renversèrent un vieillard 'qui ne put ou ne voulut se ranger': il ne fut que blessé, mais fut, dûment, pour les besoins de la cause, tenu pour mort. Qu'un seul vieillard aît été renversé et qu'on en ait fait si grand état dans le camp populaire, cela indique, mieux que tous les récits contemporains, à quel point fut anodine la 'répression.'"—"La Révolution," by Louis Madelin, p. 63.

Cécile Renault

"... It is .. the 23rd of May, and towards nine in the evening, Cécile Renault, Paper-dealer's daughter, a young woman of soft,

"Le Comité l'ayant fait fouiller, on trouva *sur elle* deux petits couteaux. Elle avait déposé un petit paquet chez un citoyen.

(Then followed the abandonment of privileges in a sitting that lasted till eight in the morning.)—"La Révolution," by Louis Madelin, p. 81

blooming look, presents herself at the Cabinet-maker's in the Rue Saint-Honoré; desires to see Robespierre. Robespierre cannot be seen; she grumbles irreverently. They lay hold of her. She has left a basket in a shop hard by: *in the basket are* female change of raiment and *two knives*! Poor Cécile, examined by Committee, declares she 'wanted to see what a tyrant was like': the change of raiment was 'for my own use in the place I am surely going to.' 'What place?' 'Prison; and then the Guillotine,' answered she. Such things come of Charlotte Corday; in a people prone to imitation, and monomania! Swart, choleric men try Charlotte's feat, and their pistols miss fire; soft, blooming young women try it, *and only half resolute, leave their knives in a shop.*"—Vol. III, Book VI, chap. iii.

The Legend of Foulon

Carlyle

"Our Foulons, Berthiers intrigue for him: old Foulon, who has now nothing to do but intrigue; who is known and even seen to be what they call a scoundrel; but of unmeasured wealth; who, from Commissariat-clerk which he once was, may hope, some think, if the game go right, to be Minister himself one day."—Vol. I. Book III. chap. ii.

". . . Foulon named 'âme damnée du Parlement'; a man grown grey in treachery, in griping, projecting, intriguing, and iniquity: who once, when it was objected to some finance-scheme of his: 'What will the people do?'—made answer, in the fire of discussion, 'The people may eat grass.' ." —Vol. I. Book III. chap. ix.

Taine

"M. Foulon, maître sévère, mais intelligent et utile, a dépensé soixante mille francs, l'hiver précédent, dans sa terre pour donner de l'ouvrage aux pauvres. . . . Pour Foulon, comme pour Reveillon, une légende s'est faite marquée au même coin, sorte de monnaie courante à l'usage du peuple et que le peuple a fabriqué lui-même en rassemblant dans un mot tragique l'amas de ses souffrances et de ses ressentiments.

"Note.—Par exemple: 'Il est sévère avec ses vassaux.' 'Il ne leur donne pas de pain, ils veulent donc qu'ils mangent de l'herbe?' 'Il veut qu'ils mangent de l'herbe comme ses chevaux," etc. '. . . On retrouve la même légende dans d'autres Jacqueries contme-

Payen, limonadier . . . il contenait un habillement complet de femme." —Wallon's "Tribunal Révolutionnaire," Vol. IV. p. 7.

On this point all writers are agreed—Carlyle apparently invented the point of her leaving the knives in a shop so as to minimize the courage of an anti-revolutionary and to strike an effect. He also leaves out carefully Cécile Renault's courageous speech to the Tribunal: "J'ai dit que je pleurais notre bon roi, oui, je l'ai dit, et je voudrais qu'il vécut encore. N'êtes-vous pas cinq cents rois, et tous plus insolents et despotiques que ne l'était celui que vous avez tué?" etc.

poraines.'"—"La Révolution," by H. Taine, Vol. I. p. 52.

The "Biographie Universelle" of Michaud, which we know Carlyle habitually consulted (see Mr Fletcher's edition of "Carlyle," note on p. 45), also gives a full account of Foulon's honourable career, and indignantly refutes the libels circulated about him

Death of Louis XVI

Carlyle

"He mounts the scaffold, not without delay; he is in puce coat, breeches of grey, white stocks. He strips off the coat; stands disclosed in a sleeve-waistcoat of white flannel. The executioners approach to bind him; he spurns, resists; Abbé Edgeworth has to remind him how the Saviour, in whom men trust, submitted to be bound. His hands are tied, his head bare; the fatal moment is come. He advances to the edge of the scaffold, 'his face very red,' and says: 'Frenchmen, I die innocent; it is from the Scaffold and near appearing before God that I tell you so. I pardon my enemies; I desire that France —' A General on horseback, Santerre or another, prances out, with uplifted hand: 'Tambours!' The drums drown the voice. 'Executioners, do your duty!' The executioners, desperate lest themselves be murdered (for Santerre and his Armed Ranks will strike, if they do not), *seize the hapless Louis: six of them desperate, him singly desperate, struggling there; and bind him to their plank.* Abbé Edgeworth, stooping, bespeaks him: 'Son of Sain Louis, ascend to heaven." The axe clanks down;

Account written by the Executioner Sanson

"Voici, suivant ma romesse, l'exacte vérité de ce qui s'est passé. Descendant de la voiture pour l'exécution, on lui a dit qu'il fallait ôter son habit; il fit quelques difficultés, en disant qu'on pouvait l'exécuter comme il était. Sur la représentation que la chose était impossible, il a lui-même aidé à ôter son habit. Il fit ensuite la même difficulté lorsqu'il s'est agi de lui lier les mains, qu'il donna lui-même lorsque la personne qui l'accompagnait lui eût dit que c'était un dernier sacrifice. Il s'informa si les tambours battraient toujours; il lui fut répondu que l'on n'en savait rien, et c'était la vérité. Il monta sur l'échafaud; il voulut foncer sur le devant, comme voulant parler; mais on lui représenta que la chose était impossible encore; il se laissa alors conduire à l'endroit où on l'attacha et où il s'est écrié très haut: PEUPLE! JE MEURS INNOCENT! ensuite, se retournant vers nous, il nous dit: JE SUIS INNOCENT DE TOUT CE DONT ON M'INCULPE. JE SOUHAITE QUE MON SANG PUISSE CIMENTER LE BONHEUR DES FRANÇAIS. Voilà, Citoyen, ses dernières et véritables paroles.

a King's life is shorn away."—Vol. III. Book II. chap. viii.

" L'espèce de petit débat qui se fit au pied de l'échafaud, roulait sur ce qu'il ne croyait pas nécessaire qu'il ôtât son habit et qu'on lui liât les mains. Il fit aussi la proposition de se couper lui-même les cheveux. Et pour rendre hommage à la vérité, il a soutenu tout cela avec un sangfroid et une fermeté qui nous a tous étonnés, et je reste très convainçu qu'il avait puisé cette fermeté dans les principes de la religion, dont personne plus que lui ne paraissait pénétré et persuadé.

" Vous pouvez être assuré, Citoyen, que voilà la vérité dans son plus grand jour."

Signé SANSON.

It was Santerre who said that the King struggled on the scaffold, and his was the evidence that Carlyle chose to accept!

CARLYLE AS A JUDGE OF CHARACTER

CARLYLE ON MADAME ROLAND

" Reader, mark that queen-like burgher woman: beautiful, Amazonian-graceful to the eye; more so to the mind. *Unconscious of her worth* (as all worth is), of her greatness, of her crystal clearness; genuine, the creature of Sincerity and Nature; in an age of Artificiality, Pollution, and Cant; there in her still completeness, in her still invincibility, *she,* if thou knew it, is the noblest of all living Frenchwomen—and will be seen one day. O, blessed rather while *un*seen, even of herself! "—Vol. II. Book I. chap. viii.

MADAME ROLAND ON HERSELF

" C'est peut-être ici le lieu de faire mon portrait. . . . Ma figure n'avait rien de frappant qu'une grande fraîcheur, beaucoup de douceur et d'expression; à détailler chacun de ses traits, on peut se demander où donc en est la beauté? aucun n'est régulier, tous plaisent. La bouche est un peu grande, on en voit mille de plus jolies, pas une n'a le sourire plus tendre et plus séducteur. [A page more follows describing in detail 'les trésors que la bonne nature m'avait donnés.'] . . . Mon portrait a été dessiné plusieurs fois, peint et gravé: aucune de ces imitations ne donne l'idée de ma personne; elle est difficile à saisir, parce que j'ai plus d'âme que de figure, plus d'expression que de traits. Un artiste ordinaire ne peut le rendre, il est même pro-

bable qu'il ne la voit pas. . . . Je me trouve si bête avec tant de gens que, m'apercevant de mes ressources avec les personnes spirituelles, j'ai cru longtemps dans ma bonhomie, que c'était à leur habileté que j'en étais redevable. Je plais généralement, parce que je craindrais d'offenser qui que ce fût; mais il n'appartient pas à tous de me trouver jolie et *de sentir ce que je vaux*."—"Mémoires de Madame Roland," Vol. II. pp. 97–100.

DANTON

CARLYLE	SAYINGS OF DANTON
"The great heart of Danton. . "—Vol. III. Book VI. chap. i.	"Buvons le sang des ennemis de l'humanité!"—Danton.
	Danton, speaking of the Massacres of September to the duc de Chartres: "C'est moi qui l'ai fait."
	Danton to the Convention: "Que m'importe d'être appelé buveur de sang!"
	Danton to Thibaudeau: "Je mangerais les entrailles à Robespierre."

But on no point is Carlyle so far from the truth as in this monstrous passage about the Reign of Terror which in its callousness can only be compared to his brutal sneer at the sufferings of the little Dauphin. It must be read side by side with the account given by Isnard—Isnard, who started as a furious revolutionary, but lived to see the full horror produced by the system of which he had been a part author.

CARLYLE	ISNARD
"History, looking back over this France through long times . . . confesses mournfully that there is no period to be met with in which	"Civil war kindled; Robespierre raised to the throne of the dictator; the Convention mutilated, powerless, and subjugated; the Reign

the general Twenty-five Millions of France suffered *less* than in this period which they name Reign of Terror! But it was not the dumb Millions that suffered here; it was the speaking Thousands, and Hundreds, and Units, who shrieked and published and made the world ring with their wail as they could and should: that is the grand peculiarity."—Vol. III. Book VII. chap. vi.

of Terror established; all natural feelings stifled; liberty of action, speech, and of the Press in chains; honesty, virtue, and philosophy banished; commerce, arts, and sciences abolished; . . . numberless sanguinary tribunals set up, the power of life and death delegated to the most ferocious of men, thousands of scaffolds erected, . . . 100,000 victims executed, crushed, or drowned, . . . millions of families of widows and orphans bathed in tears . . . vast tracts of country providing no harvest but bones and thorns; old age massacred and burnt on its bed of suffering; the unborn child slaughtered; virginity violated in the arms of death; the monsters of the ocean gorged with human flesh; the Loire rolling over more corpses than stones; the Rhône and the Saône changed into rivers of blood; Vaucluse into a fountain of tears; Nantes into a tomb; Paris, Arras, Bordeaux, Strasbourg into slaughter-houses; Lyons into ruins; the South into a desert, and the whole of France into a vast scene of horror, pillage, and murder."

It is on this amazing fallacy—that the Terror proved beneficial to the people—that Carlyle's view of the Revolution is founded, a fallacy proceeding from the same perverse wrong-headedness that prompted his infamous letter to the *Times* on November 18th, 1870, deploring the "cheap pity and newspaper lamentation over fallen and afflicted France," pouring forth floods of invective against the country that had now become the object of his insane hatred, and ending with the fervent hope that "noble, patient, deep, pious, and solid Germany should be at length welded into a nation and become Queen of the Continent."

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